

THE VINEY SKETCHES

— BY —

BLANCHE GOODMAN.

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THE ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE

FRANKLIN, OHIO

DENVER, COLO.

THE
VINEY
SKETCHES

BY
BLANCHE GOODMAN.

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Saturday Evening Post.*

“TO MY MOTHER”

This little volume is dedicated with
love by the author.

ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE
Franklin, Ohio. Denver, Colo.

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Book-Raisin'

“Dis heah presen’ gination,” said Viney as she sprinkled down the clothes preparatory to ironing and tightly wadded each piece before placing it in the basket, “lays too much sto’ by books.”

“Folks says,” observed Uncle Peter, “dat hit’s books what mek de young people smahter’n de ol’ uns nowadays.”

“Folks!” sniffed Aunt Viney scornfully. “What folks says dat? De young uns deyself says hit, dat’s who. But you an’ me knows better. De things what ’mounts to somep’n am always heah to be learnt, ef dey is put down in books er not; an’ de things what don’ ’mount to shucks dries up an’ blows ’way, jes’ lak all no ’count things does ef you goes on an’ lets ’em alone. I had a exspe’unce oncet where I run plumb up against de book-learnin’ business, an’ you can be de jedge of who come out on top.

“I was out in de yahd one day hangin’ out clothes when Miss Fanny sent word fo’ me to come on up to de house right dat minute an’ he’p her git ready to go ’way, cause she’d jes’ got bad news fum Miss May an’ she was gwine to take de train dat ve’y aft’noon an’ go to her.

“I run as fas’ as my laigs could tote me, an’ when I come on up to de house I foun’ Miss Fanny dat tore up an’ worritted dat I couldn’t sca’cely do nothin’ wid her. She tol’ me dat a telegraph had come sayin’ Miss May had a pensights an’ have to have it tuck out ef she want to live. Dat’s whut Miss Fanny tole me ’tween cryin’ an’ wringin’ huh han’s. Fum de soun’ of hit I knowed dat whut Miss May had mus’ ’a’ been somep’n awful, an’ I helped Miss Fanny to git ready as fas’ as I could.

“Viney,” say Miss Fanny as I went on out to de ca’iage wid her an’ de Cunnel to tell her goodby, ‘I reckon Miss May’ll be ca’ied to de infernery an’ Ise a-gwine to sen’ de white nuss she’s got ovah heah wid de baby, ’cause hit’ll be better fo’ hit to be heah twel she am all

right again; an' I'll pen' on you to ovahsee things even ef de nuss am a fus'-class one.'

"Dat was on a Choosday, an' on Thu'sday Cunnel Slocum got word to meet de nuss an' baby at de depot. Isom hitch up de ca'iage an' me an' him an' de Cunnel went on down to wait twel de train come in. Pretty soon here it come a-rumblin' an' puffin' in, an' when hit slowed up an' stopped a white lady carryin' a baby in huh ahms steps off.

"We all got in de ca'iage, an' den I tuck a good look at de baby. Laws, Uncle Peter, I don' know when I has evah seed such a puny lookin' chil'—nothin' but skin an' gristle—an' fo' de life er me I couldn't he'p sayin': 'How come de baby so po' an' spin'ling?' I don' think de Cunnel notice how bad dat li'l thing look, he was so chuck full er bein' a gran'pa, er else he didn' want to let on.

"'De baby am puffedekly well,' say de train nuss. 'He am not perzackly what you calls fat, but he am healthy, 'cause we's a-raisin' him 'cordin' to de rules laid down in Doctor Bolter's book an' he's a-gwine to be de fines' baby in de lan'.'

"I says to myse'f: 'Ef he's a-gwine to he better hurry up an' git on de road, fo' he's a fur ways frum hit.' Den I says out loud: 'S'posin' you lets me hol' him in my ahms a while so dat you can res'.' I was jes' achin' to fol' dat li'l lamb up to me. At dat de nuss open her eyes wide at me an' 'spon's: 'Thanky, Viney, but 'cordin' to de book hit's bad fo' de baby to be helt by so many dif'ent people so I'll jes' keep him.' Well, ef dat didn' beat my time! I ain't open my mouf after dat, an' I jes' set an listen to de Cunnel axin' questions 'bout Miss May an' how she was gittin on, while we rid up to de house. Dat mawnin' I had gone on up to de garret an' brung down a cradle what was up dere—de ve'y one dat Miss May herse'f had been rocked in—an' had put hit in de room where de nuss an' de baby was to be. De minute we come in de room an' her eyes lit on hit she say: 'Am dat fo' de baby?' 'Yes'm,' says I, awful proud, 'dat's de one dat de baby's own ma slep' in.' An' den what you reckon dat nuss say, Uncle Peter?" The old

man shook his head as he gazed at Viney with a blank expression.

"She tol' me," said Viney slowly, watching the effect of her words on Uncle Peter, "dat de rules er de book was dead agin cradles! Yes, dat's what she said! Den she went on to 'splain dat de rockin' did somep'n er other to de baby's diges'ment an' addled up some sort er gray stuff what am in de brames, an' a lot mo' fool talk 'bout things what no one evah hearn tell of outside er de man what writ de book, an' he nevah was no ma hisse'f, so how could he tell?"

"Well, I seen den an' dere dat one of two things was gwine to happen—dey was gwine to be a set-to, er else I'd have to jes' nachully let her walk all ovah me an' not say nothin'. As I knows better'n to be unmannerable to white folks I stepped back an' give her de middle er de road.

"Of, all de nonsense dat I evah hearn tell of dat baby was put thoo de wussest. You mus'n't pat him on de back when he have de colic 'cause hit jars de spine. You mus'n't 'low no one to kiss him 'cause dey am li'l wiggly things on folks dat you cain't see wid de neckid eye, what am li'ble to drap off on de baby an' give him all kinds er 'zeases. I ax de nuss: 'How come ef folks has got dem things on 'em dat dey ain't got de 'zeases you say dey gives to de baby?' but she couldn' 'splain hit to me un'erstandably, an' I don' b'lieve she knowed herse'f. You mus'n't talk much in front er de baby, 'cause dat gits hits mind to wukkin' befo' de time sot fo' hit to wuk an' de book am strong agin dat. I cain't 'member all de things dat nuss did tell me, but no matter what she say, I always tol' her 'Yes'm,' 'cause I knowed hit was de bes' way to ac'.

"De baby wa'n't pickin' up a bit, an' dem book doin's was hahmin' him. Anybody wid a half eye could see hit. Babies has got to have some love, an' dis un didn' have nothin' but rules to live off'n. One aft'noon when de nuss had gone out to take her airin' I went on up to de room where de baby was layin' an' frettin' sof' lak to hisse'f, jes' wantin' to be tuck up in some one's ahms. 'You po' li'l angel,' says I, 'I don' keer ef a hun'erd books

an' fo'ty-nine train nusses say hit's agin de rules, I'm a-gwine to rock you to sleep.' Wid dat I tuck him out'n de bed, an' settin' down in a rockin' cheer I commence goin' back an' fo'th an' singin', jes' like I use to sing to my own chillen an' Miss Fanny's. I ain't got no fu'ther ways 'long dan,

Blow, Gab'el, blow, an' call yo' chillen home,
when de baby open his eyes at me wid de queerest look, lak as ef he was pleased but didn' know what to mek of hit. Den he closed 'em agin an' put his li'l hand on my bosom, much as to say: 'Go on wid it. Dat's what I has been missin' all dis time.' I went cl'ar to de back er my haid fo' all de songs I use to sing to de chillen when dey was babies, an' one after another I sung an' sung an' us two havin' de grandes' time together whatevah you hearn tell of. He jes' sung 'long wid me, in de way 'babies does, sorter croonin' lak, twel bimeby de han's er de clock had crep roun' mos' to three an' hit was time fo' de nuss to come back. I had kep' a eye on de window so's I could see up de street, an' sho' nuff heah she come back fum her airin'. De baby was soun' asleep. I laid him on his bed an' I says: 'Don't yo' fret no mo', honey lamb, you an' me am a-goin' to have a good time together ev'ry aft'noon.' An' dat's jes' what we done. Somehow befo' long hit seem lak dat baby commence lookin' mo' happier; but yet he wa'n't doin' de way a baby ought to be doin', fo' what he needed was fat. I couldn' see how he was a-gwine to evah git a staht.

"One day when de nuss was standin' down in de kitchen fixin' de milk an' stickin' a li'l glass stick in hit to see how many hots hit was—she could er jes' as well poke her finger in hit to fin' out—I says to myse'f: 'Milk ain't all dat chil' needs.' An' dat aft'noon when de nuss was gone I ca'ied some pot-liquor up to de baby. You ought to seen de way he enjoyed hit an' smack his lips ovah hit fo' mo'. 'Dat shows what you needs,' says I, an' sho' nough 'twan't many days befo' de pockets in his skin begin to fill up an' he look lak a real baby stid er imbertation er one.

"De nuss was takin' de credit to herse'f an' swellin' up 'bout dat book-raisin' business, an' I jes set back an'

let her. I reckon she nevah would a foun' de real cause ef she hadn' a walked in on me an' ketched me feedin' de baby while I was holdin' him on my lap in de rockin' cheer.

"When she ketched her breff she dashed at me lak a houn' after a possum, grabbed dat baby up an' say 'tween her teef: 'How das' you tech dis baby what's in my cha'ge? How das' you set in a rockin' cheer wid him? How das' you feed him milk widout me pescribin' hit?' At dat I broke in—tho' dey wa'n't 'nough room in her conbersation to git in a pinpoint sca'cely: 'Dis ain't milk, hit's pot-liquor'; an', Laws! you ought to hearn de yell she let out.

"Cunnel Slocum was downstairs in de libery wid de rheumatiz, but all dat noise distracted his intention an' he drug hisse'f upstairs to see what de fracas was 'bout.

"'Cunnel Slocum,' de nuss hollered as soon as he hit de do', dis heah woman am feedin' de baby pizen when my back am turned, an' interferin' wid my wuk heah!' At dat de Cunnel's eyes bulge out too fo' a minute, but befo' he had time to say a word I picked up de cup an' spoon dat quick an' helt 'em un'er his nose. 'Pot-liquor,' says I, jes' lak dat, an' de Cunnel's eyes went back in again.

"'Tut! tut!' he say to de nuss as he sniffed at de cup; 'ef dis am pizen I reckon dey wouldn' a been no sojers in de Souf to fight in de wah, fo' dey wa'n't none of 'em but what knowed de tas'e of dis stuff when dey was babies.'

"'You means,' say de nuss, 'dat you's a-gwine to let dis baby be fed on stuff what dey ain't no rules in de book fo'?' 'Viney's de one dat can settle de question,' 'spon's de Cunnel. 'She's brung up all my chillen an' her'n, an' I reckon she knows somep'n 'bout hit.'

"'Den,' says de nuss, 'I designs my job right heah!' an' dat's what she done.

"'You's all mine now,' says I to de baby, an' he crowed at me lak he un'stood what I say. De Cunnel an' me made hit up dat we wa'n't gwine to say nothin' to Miss Fanny ner Miss May twel dey come.

"'De time pass by an' de baby doin' finer ev'y day

twel he was so fat an' sassy you wouldn' 'a' knowed him. Miss Fanny writ dat she was ready to bring Miss May back wid her an' keep her heah twel she git mo' stronger. Dey come on home one evenin', an' de fus' thing Miss May ax fo' of cose was de baby. She was dat anxious an' 'cited dat she couldn' sca'cely wait twel I brung him in de room—an' such a-goin' on as dey was when I toted him in an' helt him out to her! She couldn' sca'cely b'lieve hit 'twas her own chile, de improvements on him was so pow'ful much. As soon as she sorter settled down she say: 'But where am de nuss? Why ain't he in de room? She am a puffick wonder an' I wants to see her right dis ve'y minute!'

"'You's a-lookin' at her right now,' says de Cunnel, chucklin' to beat de ban. 'Heah's de onliest nuss what knows how to raise de Slocum babies anyhow,' an' he laid his han' on my ahm. Den he ups an' tells de whole story, an' I don' nevah remember when I ha' seed Miss Fanny ner Miss May so please wid me.

"'In de middle of de talk, though, I notice Miss May sniffin' an' sniffin' at de baby, sorter curious lak, an' den she say: 'Viney, hit pears to me lak I smells bacon on de baby.' 'Dat's jes' edzackly what you smells,' says I, 'fo' I lets him chaw on a strip now an' den de same lak I use to let you.'

"'Bacon!' say Miss May; 'bacon! Why, Viney, de book say——' an' at dat she stopped an' we all busted right out laughin'. Dat was de las' I evah hearn of book-raisin' in dat house."

"Den," said Uncle Peter, "I reckon you don' set much sto' by no kin' er book dat dey has now'days, does you?"

"Ef you's bawned widout common sense, dey ain't a-gwine to do you no good; an' ef you's bawned wid common sense, you don't need 'em," was Viney's answer.

Checkmating Miss Fanny.

"Mawnin'!" called Viney to Uncle Peter as he paused in the roadway before the cabin. "Whar is you boun'?"

"I gwine up to Majah Buffo'd's to he'p dig a foundation, an' Ise got to hurry." Uncle Peter approached the gate.

"Mought as well come on in an' set a minute an' res' yo'se'f," invited Viney, tossing the last bit of breadcrust to a pair of fowls that waited expectantly near her.

"I promise' Majah Buffo'd to be up at de house early." As he spoke the old man came slowly up the path to the cabin steps and laboriously deposited himself upon the one nearest the ground. "I nevah dis'points no one."

"Whut's Majah Buffo'd havin' a foundation dug fo?" inquired Viney as she seated herself upon the step beside him.

"He's gwine to have a b' jection made to de front mirandy," answered Uncle Peter, his gaze wandering leisurely about the yard. "Dem two Dominickers you was jes' feedin' am new, ain't dey?"

Viney followed his glance to the fence corner, where the couple of fine-looking pullets were busy scratching gravel. A slow smile overspread her countenance.

"Dem young Dominickers is a peace gif'," she announced. "Cunnel Slocum p'sented me wid dem fowl."

"A peace gif'?" Uncle Peter's face expressed his interest and curiosity. "How come?"

"Fo' bringin' down peace on de Slocum househol'. Dat's whut de cunnel say. An hit's to be a secret fum Miss Fanny—on'y," continued Viney, with a puzzled look, "I cain't puzzackly mek out whut I done to bring peace 'bout."

Uncle Peter, settling himself more comfortably upon the steps, waited expectantly.

"Uncle Petah," began Viney, "has you evah noticed how dat, when chillen ain't no sooner'n got raised and

growed up, dey tu'ns roun' an' commences raisin' dey pa'unts de way dey thinks de job oughta been did?"

"Dat have come under my noticement," agreed Uncle Peter.

"Well, dat's whut happen at de Slocumses. Hadn't Miss May come ovah heah fum Nashville an' egged huh ma on into givin' dat suffidge tea she give—you 'members de time, Uncle Petah—dey nevah would 'a' been no trouble. Ez long as I has knowed de cunnel an' Miss Fanny, de on'y diff'ence dey evah haves am in de spring-time of de yeah, when Miss Fanny stahts in fo' to arrange de flower beds on de front lawn, an' de cunnel tries to disrup' her intentions.

"Fum de time dat meetin' was helt dey was a change come ovah Miss Fanny. Hit look lak a new sperit got into huh; an' a bigger diff'ence in any one I nevah seed! Miss Fanny's whole conbersation wa'n't nothin' but suffidge an' votes fo' women; an' durin' Miss May's whole visit to huh ma dem two ladies ain't done a thing but traipse roun' all day gittin' up clubs an' mekkin' de yuther ladies sign de pledge dat dey'd go in fo' de 'Cause,' as Miss May called hit. Miss Fanny would 'a' no mo' thought of gittin' in such messes ef Miss May hadn't put hit in huh haid dan she'd 'a' thought o' flyin'.

"At fus' Cunnel Slocum tuck hit as a joke, an' ev'y time Miss Fanny'd staht to argyfyin' wid him he'd set back an' laugh at huh same's if she was a child, an' not answer huh questions 'cep'n wid teasin'. But by-an'-by, whut wid hit goin' on at breakfus', dinner an' supper, an' Miss Fanny commencin' to stay 'way fum home so much, de cunnel begin to see hit wa'n't such a joke as he thought hit was; an' he stahted in gittin' right-down cross 'bout hit. Miss Fanny wa'n't doin' a thing but sashayin' roun' fum one meetin' to another, stahtin' in early in de mawnin' an' not gittin' back twel evenin' some time.

"Hit seem right queer dat de time had evah come when she wa'n't settin' on de po'ch wid her sewin', waitin' fo' Cunnel Slocum to come home. Now hit was all switched roun' de yuther way. De cunnel was de one on de waitin' list, an' he'd tek his papah an' p'ten' to

read; but, fum de way he was knittin' his eyebrows an' scowlin' to hisse'f, dey wa'n't much readin' goin' on as I could see.

"One aft'noon I come on out to ask him how soon he 'spected Miss Fanny home, as she had promise' to give me a poorhouse plaster fo' Isom's back ef I'd come fo' hit.

"Cunnel didn't answer me at fus'. He jes' looked at me wid a far-away look in his eyes an' den say: 'Viney, how soon befo' you am gwine to staht out fo' to git de vote?'

"I wa'n't lookin fo' dat kin' er answer to my question, an' hit kinder stumped me fo' a minute. An' den I says: 'As soon as Isom tells me I cain't do hit, suh!' jes' lak dat!

"Fo' a minute de cunnel set up straight an' look' at me square in de eye, lak as tho' he didn't catch whut I 'spon' to him; an' den all of a sudden he r'ared back an' let out a laugh dat could 'a' been heard cl'ar to kingdom come. By-an'-by he slap' his knee an' give one mo' chuckle. Den he sot quiet a minute, jes' thinkin'. 'Dat's de cure!' he say, mo' to hisse'f dan ef he was speakin' to me. 'Dat's de cure! Viney, ef whut I has in my min' wuks out you's gwine to git a presen' fum me.'

"I says: 'Yes, suh—thanky, suh, Cunnel Slocum!'—tho' I didn't un'stan' de connection. But I ain't de kind to defuse a presen' dat am offered in a kin sperit; so I thanked him ag'in an' lef' him settin' dere meditatin'.

"Hit was sev'al days, Uncle Petah, befo' I got up to Slocumses agin, because I was he'pin' out on'y now an' then; an' when I did git back, I foun' de bigges' s'prise waitin' me dat you c'n 'magine. Hit didn't tek me no time to see dat sumpin had happen' in de Slocum household dat was out o' de ord'nary; an' when de whole trufe come out I jes' sot down in my tracks!

"I had walked in de house an' axed fo' to see Miss Fanny, when de housemaid says:

"'Dey's gone to a suffidge meetin'!'

"'Who do you mean by dey?' says I.

"'Cunnel an' Miss Slocum,' she answer.

"'Cunnel Slocum gone to a suffidge meetin'!' says

I, leanin' aginst de wall to p'vent myse'f fum fallin' ovah. 'Well, de Lawd bless us!'

"Uncle Petah, I don't know perzackly how hit come about, but hit sho' was de case. Endurin' de time I was away—hit wa'n't mo'n a week—Miss Fanny mus' a wucked de rabbit's foot on de cunnel, and he had done gone an' jined de Cause! He hadn't jes' dabbled one foot in hit neither—he'd walked in plum up to his neck; an' de suffidge question was takin' on him lak a case er measles.

"Miss Fanny was so pleased an' tuck up 'splainin' things to him dat she tu'ned de housecleanin' entirely ovah to me endurin' de time sot to do hit; an' when de two of 'em wa'n't 'tendin' some meetin' or othah dey was readin' outen de book whut Miss Fanny had on de subjec' or outen de newspapers 'bout some millet-hands acrost de sea whut had busted into de votin' ring—tho' whut farm hands wants to mix up in politics fo' is mo'n I can see!

"Cunnel Slocum had been in de habit of goin' down to 'ten' to his law business, rain er shine, ev'y day; but now he commence' gittin' sorter slack 'bout bein' early to de office, an' by-an'-by he commence' skippin' a day er so an' stayin' home so's he could put mo' time on suffidge wid Miss Fanny. As his nephew, Mistah Frank, was in de office, anyhow, I reckon de business was bein' 'tended to; an' maybe dats' why Cunnel Slocum tuck to stayin' home sev'al days at a time; an' pretty soon he plum' quit goin' down an' jes' phomed to Mistah Frank now an' den.

"Whenever dey'd talk on de phome de cunnel'd laugh a monst'us lot, an' speak low to Mistah Frank in de phome deceiver, lak as do' de law business was pow'ful funny. Dey mos' usually talked wid each othah when Miss Fanny was out er hearin'; so I reckoned de cunnel didn't want to distrack huh min' fum de Cause wid his business affairs.

"Wid all dis goin' on, hit looks lak Miss Fanny's face ought to 'a' stretched wider an' wider wid happiness ev'y day, fo' she had 'complished huh aim an' won de cunnel, haht an' soul; but, Uncle Petah, hit wa'n't de case. I knows Miss Fanny lak I does myse'f, an' dey

ain't nevah de littles' thing whut's eatin' on huh dat I cain't tell hit as quick as I sees huh. An' sumpin sho' was eatin' on huh now. She'd git a sort er res'less look in huh eye ev'y now an' den when she thought no one wa'n't lookin', an' mos' 'specially when de cunnel'd settle hisse'f in de mawnin' aftah breakfus' an' staht in to read out loud 'bout de advancement of de Cause an' de p'ogress hit twuz makin'.

"Miss Fanny begin to look lak huh min' wa'n't near as much on de advancement of de cause as hit was on sumpin else; an' one mawnin' she broke out in de middle of de cunnel's readin' an' says, crosslike: 'Cunnel Slocum, don't you reckon hit'd be jes' as well to let de readin' wait twel dis evenin', an' you go on down to yo' office fo' a change? You know de law business needs yo' intention now an' den.' An' Miss Fanny suttently did look sour when she say 'now an' den.'

"De cunnel was so s'prised he couldn't speak fo' a minute; he jes' sot back an' look' at Miss Fanny. Den he riz up ez tall ez de ceilin' mos' an' says, sorter hurtlike:

"'Give up de Cause befo' we's got to de end of de fight! Tu'n mah back on de nobles' war whut was evah fit an' walk offen de fiel', leavin' de others to ca'y on de battle! I is shocked at you, my deah—I is wuss dan shocked!'

"Dem was de wu'ds as well as I can 'member dem, Uncle Petah. An' dey was some mo' too, whut I fo'gits; but Cunnel Slocum suttently did look gran' when he was sayin' 'em, an' Miss Fanny look' so emba'sseed an' swiveled up when he got done talkin' dat she tried to cover up huh feelin's by beggin' him to go on readin'. Hit took a sight er coaxin, to git de cunnel stahted too!

"Dat night, when Isom come home, he was tellin' me of sumpin dat happen' in town de aft'noon befo', whut set me to thinkin'. He had drove Miss Fanny down to do some shoppin' an' jes' as she was gittin' in de ca'iage to go home, Gen'l Poindextah an' Mistah Tom Clay come up an' commence' plaguin' huh 'bout de cunnel bein' de onlies' man in town whut had j'ined de petticoat fo'ces—as dey called hit; an' dey cornered huh up so wid dey teasin' dat Miss Fanny los' huh tempah an' drove off all

frustrated. Isom said dat, fum whut he could jedge fum whut dey tol huh, she must 'a' been hearin' de same on all sides; an' hit was beginnin' to mek Miss Fanny as touchy as a so' tooth.

"Uncle Petah, de queeres' paht of de whole thing was dat de cunnel an' Miss Fanny had swapped places, an' he was de one now dat was chuck full er de suffidge question, an' Miss Fanny had sorter los' ginger. Anybody could see wid half a eye, ef dey knowed huh lak I does, dat she was on'y p'tendin' to keep huh min' on hit; but she had bit off mo'n she could chew, an she had to keep on p'tendin', er have de laugh on huh good an' hahd.

"Things has to come to a haid when dey gits in a fix lak dat. Dey was to be a gran' p'rade of de suffidge ladies in town; an' Miss Fanny an' Majah Buffo'd's wife, bein' de high muckamucks of de Cause, was to haid de p'rade an' ma'ch all de way down Main Street an' back—not a man in line; not even de brass ban', 'cause de Young Ladies' Sem'nary had offered dey se'vices to p'vide dey own band.

"Dey was all to be dressed in white; an' I heard Miss Fanny say dey was gwine to ca'y banners wid 'vices on 'em; an' wear de colors of de Cause, puzzackly lak de Daughters of Africa do when we has a gran' tu'nout.

"Mistah Frank was up de evenin' befo'—he hadn't been up to de house fo' a coon's age—an' dey was settin' at de table talkin' 'bout de doin's dat was gwine to be de nex' day. Miss Fanny says to de cunnel:

"'I reckon de bes' place fo' you to see de p'rade fum would be de cou'thouse yahd.'

"'See de p'rade fum!' 'spon's de cunnel. 'Why, I's gwine to be in de p'rade mahse'f!'

"'You!' says Miss Fanny, risin' halfway up in huh chair wid s'prise an' den settin' down agin. 'I fails to see de joke, Cunnel Slocum!' she says, sorter dry lak.

"Mistah Frank was takin' a drink er water, an' jes' den he choked an' coughed twel de cunnel had to slap him on de back to git him straightened out.

"'Am dey a rule agin de men enterin' de p'rade?' asks Cunnel Slocum after Mistah Frank was quiet.

"'Miss Fanny stopped fo' a minute. Den she says:

“‘Not puzzackly; but de understandin’ am——’

“‘Well,’ says de cunnel, ‘so long as dey ain’t no rule, I reckon dey cain’t put me out ef I wants to j’ine hit!’

“‘Hit look’ lak Mistah Frank had sumpin wrong wid his swallerin’ pipes, ‘cause he choked agin; but he overcome it hisse’f, widout any he’p.

“‘Hit’s a women’s p’rade,” says Miss Fanny, as stiff as a remrod an’ wid huh eyes snappin’ lak dey do snap sometimes; ‘an’ dat am de understanding all ovah.’

“‘Well, bless my time, Fanny!’ says Cunnel Slocum, lookin’ mos’ pow’fully ‘stonished, ‘ef you ain’t aimin’ to git de men on yo’ side whut in de name o’ common sense am you aimin’ fo’?’

“Miss Fanny looked stubbo’n an’ helt huh haid stiffer.

“‘Dat am not de question, Cunnel Slocum!’ she says. ‘De question am: Is you gwine to ride in de p’rade?’

“‘Dat’s whut I is!’ he ‘spon’s, sotlike roun’ de jaw.

“Miss Fanny didn’t answer fo’ a minute. Den she says:

“‘In dat case, you’s gwine to be de onlies’ man in de whole p’rade!’

“‘Den hit shows how much fu’ther ‘long in p’ogress I is dan de res’ er de men,’ says Cunnel Slocum. ‘Sholy you ain’t meanin’ fo’ me to backslide at de importantest time, after you’s been an’ converted me to de Cause!’

“Miss Fanny look’ lak she was so mad she was ready to cry.

“‘You’s jes’ aimin’ to mek a laughin’ stock out er yo’s e’f an’ me, Cunnel Slocum!’ she says. ‘An I am expressly askin’ you now to keep yo’s e’f out of de p’rade, fo’ I has tuck as much teasin’ on dat subjec’ fum de men-folks as I can stan’!’ Miss Fanny suttently looked pow’ful earnes’.

“‘Oh!’ say de cunnel, gittin’ up fum de table an’ walkin’ ovah to huh chair. ‘Now we’s comin’ to de p’int!’ An’ he tuck Miss Fanny’s han’ in his’n. ‘S’pose dat you an’ me mek a ‘greement right now an’ settle de question all roun’.’

“‘How?’ asks Miss Fanny.

“‘Leave votin’ an’ politics to me,’ says de cunnel,

smilin' at huh lak a sweetheart. 'Be lak you used to be fo' dis suffidge business come up—a gyahden of flowers where I can come an' enjoy de loveliness an' sweetness, an res' aftah a day of toil!

"Well, Uncle Petah, you knows how Cunnel Slocum can talk language when he gits stahted, 'cause you's heard him speak on de Fofe er July at de Confeddick Cemetery. In a minute he had Miss Fanny smilin' an' blushin' lak a seventeen-yeah-ol' gal. Ef dey am a member of de female sect whut could hol' out agin such argyfin' as dat I ain't nevah sot eyes on huh. An' besides, Miss Fanny had nachully los' int'res' in de Cause."

"Did she ride in de p'rade?" asked Uncle Peter.

"She had to do dat much," said Viney, "'cause she'd give her promise; but dat was de en' of de business—fo' aftah dat things sorter simmered down to de ol' way—in de Slocum household. Hit was de day after de p'rade dat Cunnel Slocum sent me dem pullets wid Isom."

"Uncle Petah," said Viney presently, "now dat you's heard de story of how I come by 'em can you splain de reason?"

Uncle Peter slowly shook his head.

"I cain't," was his answer; "but dey ain't no need of you ticklin' a gif' hoss in de hind feets!"

A Change of Heart.

"De longer I lives de mo' I b'lieves dat men an' women's mighty nigh alike when dey's all shuck up together an' you comes to take account of de diffunce between 'em."

As she spoke, Viney drew from the tub before her a piece of snowy linen and wrung it vigorously. The visitor who had "drapped in for a spell" nodded in acquiescence.

"Ef a woman's fool enough to git down on de groun' an' let a man tromp on her neck, he ain't a-gwine to lose no time a-doin' hit," resumed Viney. "An' on de other han', ef a man fin's out dat a woman ain't a-gwine to stand no browbeatin', but jes' turns roun' an' lights in on him good an' strong when he starts his nonsense, w'y, he'll come to his senses fo' long, an' have all kin's er respect fo' her.

"Me an' Isom got along as peace'ble as a pair o' doves fo' de firs' few yeahs. He didn't 'low me to work hard; so I only took in two washin's a week, an' he give me spendin' money off an' on. Co'se I had to pay fo' de groceries wid it, but he give it to me fo' spendin' money, anyhow.

"We went along dat a way till 'bout de time Susannah was past fo' yeahs, an' Henry Clay three, an' de twins, Sodom an' Gomorrah, was jes' beginnin' to crawl.

"Den Isom commenced to drap off in his work, an' took to drinkin' an' beatin' me mos' every night, stid er jes' Sat'days. I tried hard to put up wid him, but looked like de harder I tried de wusser he 'have hisself. Mo'n once I started to take de chillen an' pick up an' leave him; but when hit come to de p'int I jes' couldn't.

"Things kep' goin' fum bad to worse, but I helt my mouf shet 'bout my troubles an' kep' my haid up as high as ever, tho' de Lawd knows hit was propped by a achin' neck.

"One day I was at Mis' Fanny's washin' windows, an' feelin' so miser'ble I wouldn't 'a' cared ef I'd drapped in my tracks dat minit, when Mis' Fanny says to me: 'Viney, how is you an' Isom gittin' 'long?'

"I knows now dat mealy-moufed Ros'bel, her housemaid, had been tellin' her things; but when she spoke I didn't stop to think of nothin'. I jes' busted right out cryin' an' kep' hit up till mighty nigh dark, Mis' Fanny gittin' at de trouble by bits, meantime, 'cause I hated to air my mis'ry. But she an' me was raised together on her pappy's plantation, an' I was almos' lak her own blood an' kin to her.

"'Co'se,' she says, 'I could sen' fo' Isom an' have de Cunnel tell him what's what, but I don' believe in any mixtry 'tween outsiders an' husban' an' wife, twel ev'y-thing else has been tried fus'.' She studied fo' a while. 'Has you prayed to de Lawd to soften Isom's heart to'ds you, Viney?' she said.

"'Shucks!' says I. 'Prayed? Why, I's prayed twel my tongue feels loose at bofe en's. Looks like de Lawd Hisself done give Isom up.'

"'My goodness, Viney,' says Mis' Fanny, lookin awful s'prised at me. An' den she tol' me dat my troubles mustn't make me blas' furnace—er sumpin' lak dat. 'What I wants you to do,' she says, 'is to go home dis very night an' pray yo' hardest, an' de Lawd'll send you a sign. Only, you's got to remove all doubt from yo' heart while you prays.'

"Hit was pas' suppertime when I got home, an' de house was all dark an' de chillen crying. Not a sign of Isom. But I was 'spectin' dat. I fixed de chillen a snack an' put 'em to bed. When dey was all quiet an' soun' asleep I went an' tuck out de Bible what Mis' Fanny give me long ago, an' went down on my knees an' prayed."

"I prayed loud an' I prayed low; I prayed hard an' I prayed sof'; I prayed long an' I prayed strong. Ef dey was evah a mo' pow'ful reques' sent up to de Judgment Seat I'd like to shake ha'ns wif de pusson what sent hit. An' all thoo de prayer I kep' repeatin: 'Lawd, sen' me a sign!—Lawd, sen' me a sign!'

"I was sayin' it as hard as I could when down draps somethin' on de flo' bésides me an' like to scairt me stiff, 'cause I wasn't lookin' fo' nothin' to happen. I grabbed de candle an' helt hit so as I could see, an' what you reckon hit was? A ol' buggy whip what Cunnel Slocum had give to Buddy—dat's Henry Clay—an' I had laid hit on top of de wardrobe 'cause he had mighty nigh pestered de life out of Sodom an' Gomarrah wid it.

"I couldn't un'erstan' how come dat whip to fall, an' I stood dere wid hit in my han', lookin' at hit sorter stupid-lak, when, all of a sudden, 'Glory hallelujah!' I shouted, 'Glory hallelujah! De Lawd done sent me a sign! Praise His name!'

"I was goin' on dat a way when I hears Isom fumb-
lin' at de do'. I kept on a-shoutin', meanwhile holdin' on to de whip wid one han' an' takin' a piece of clo'es-
line offen a cheer wid de other. Wid dat Isom fell in de room.

"I didn't wait fo' him to exchange de time of day wid me. I reached out, tuck dat niggah by de scruff er his neck, sot him in de cheer, an' wrop dat clo'esline roun' him so quick dat he didn't have time to make no 'bjections—dat is, not to 'mount to nothin'. Den, when he seen what I done, he commence to git madder'n a hornet. An' I felt de Sperrit risin' in me.

"'You let loose er me,' says Isom.

"'Isom Harris,' says I, 'de Lawd has showed me a way dis night to bring you back to de fol'. You has been a stray sheep fo' a long time, but, wid me'n Him workin' together, we's a-gwine to bring you back. Glory hallelujah!'

"'Quit yo' fool talk, woman,' says Isom loud-lak, 'an' let loose er me, er else I'll make you smaht fo' dis.'

"De Sperrit kep' a-risin' in me. 'He's done sent me a sign,' says I. 'Glory, glory hallelujah!' An' wid dat, kerblam! I come down on his shoulders jes' as hard as I could cut. He seen hit a-comin' an' tried to dodge, but hit didn't do him no good. Down I come, faster'n faster, an' him beggin' me to stop.

"'Glory be!' says I every time de whip come down.

'Hallelujah! I has prayed fo' a sign an' my prayer was answered.'

"'Viney, baby,' says Isom, a-whimperin', 'don't you love yo' husban'?"

"'De Bible say,' says I, 'ef you nourishes a serpent's toof in yo' bosom hit'll turn to a adder. Isom Harris, you has been a serpent's toof, but dis heah very night, you shall be washed white by de help of de Lawd.' Wid dat I begin layin' it ovah his shoulders ag'in.

"'De Bible say,' says Isom, a-hollerin' between licks, "'Wives, obey yo' husban's.'"

"'I ain't never saw any sich in de Bible,' says I, while de Sperrit jes' swelled an' swelled in me, 'but I'll b'live it's dar ef you'll show me whar hit says a woman's 'bleeged fo' to let her husban' dance on her haid (ker-blam!) an' was'e his money on craps an' drinkin' (ker-blam) an' all sorts er meanness (kerblam!). Isom Harris, de Lawd still loves you, an' dat's why He's chas-tisin' you an' has done chose me as de instrument. I asked Him to gimme a sign, an' behol'! I was give de sign. Glory hallelujah!' Wid dat I fetch him one mo' lick.

"By dat time Isom had got mighty nigh sober. He looked at me skeered-lak.

"'What you gwine to do now?' he says weak-lak an' small.

"'T's a-gwine fur to loose you so's you can give praise fo' what has come to pass.'

"Isom groaned when he riz up out er de cheer after I unwrap de rope, but he was beginnin' to see de light an' he 'sponded feebly, 'Amen!' to all what I said.

"'I went on up to Mis' Fanny's de nex' mawnin' to tell her 'bout de mir'cle what was worked. She an' de Cunnel was at breakfus', but she had me come right in jes' de same. When I finished tellin' her she jumped up an' come ovah an' pat me on de back an' says: 'Ain't I done tol' you, Viney, dat de Lawd don' nevah let a ear-nes' prayer go unanswered?'"

"'What de Cunnel say?'" inquired the visitor.

Viney snorted contemptuously. "De Cunnel? Well

he's de mos' curouses' actin' pusson, sometimes, evah you saw. All de time I was tellin' Mis' Fanny 'bout de mir'cle he was down behin' his newspapah, an' when Mis' Fanny tell me what she did he made de stranges' splutterin' soun' an' lit out er de room like he was tryin' to ketch de lightnin' express!"

Educating Sally Ann.

Dey's only two kin' er folks what book learnin' was intended fo'." Viney, leaning over the fence, arms akimbo, addressed Uncle Peter, who had drawn up his donkey cart in front of the cabin and had dismounted for a "gate" visit. "Dem what's bawn puny an' not fitten to spen' dey time no other way, an' rich folks what ain't got in wid de quality yet, an' is tryin' to find out how to act in high society.

"When de Lawd makes po' folks an' gives 'em two good arms He ain't aimin' fo' to have de job spoiled by havin' dem stick dey noses 'gainst a book all day. No, suh! He aimed fo' 'em to work, dat's what he did, an' hit makes me plum rambunctious to hear some niggers givin' deyselves airs 'cause dey kin sign dey names an' got a little book learnin'.

"I was tellin' Lindy Jackson somep'n like dat, de day she come over to ax me my 'pinion 'bout sendin' Sally Ann away wid a Yankee woman what wanted to tote her No'th with her, an' put her in one of dem schools up dere. --

"'Nigger,' says I, you don't know what you is fixin' fo'. Jes' 'cause Sally Ann can speak some pieces what one er Miss Fanny's gals learnt her, an' can read readin' out of a book an' write a little writin', ain't no sign dat she's got a call to leave home an' stuff her haid wid a lot o' book trash same as white folks. You an' me ain't never been to no school. Ain't bofe of us got along all right? Is dey any one what can beat us two when hit comes to bakin' a possum, er makin' a beat biscuit, er doin' up a week's washin', an' sendin' hit home lookin' like snow? Did you have to git book learnin' to make Alex pop de question? You brung up all yo' chillen thoo de mumps an' measles an' hoopin' cough widout knowin' how to sign yo' name. You took Alex's sass an' made a middlin' good husban' out o' him. Could yo' 'a' done hit all any better ef yo' had 'a' gone to school?"

"Lindy looked sorter stumped when I give hit to her

straight like dat, but she was like all de rest of de folks what comes to you to ax yo' opinion; she didn't have no notion of doin' what I said, an' all de time I was talkin, I could see dat she'd sot her mind on sendin' Sally Ann up No'th wid de white woman, so I might as well 'a' saved my breff.

"De nex' Sunday, when I met Lindy at de Daughters o' Zion meeting an' ax her how 'bout Sally Ann, Lindy smiled an' sorter flung her haid up like a skittish hoss an' says: 'Thanky, Sally Ann's done gone No'th to git aidgecated.'

"'Aidgecated?' says I. 'Huh!' An' I snorted at her jes' like dat, 'cause hit riles me to see a coon git biggity ovah somethin' dey ain't got no call to swell up 'bout.

"'Well,' says I, 'I sho' do hope dat she'll git all she's gwine fo'.' And wid dat I passed on.

"Fo' two years Sally Ann stayed up No'th gittin' aidgecated. Every onct in a while she writ letters home tellin' 'bout how fine hit wuz up dere an' how fas' she wuz comin' 'long. Lindy's white folks read 'em to her, an' onct she brung one er de letters ovah fo' me to read. Co'se she knowed I couldn't read no mo' dan she could, but she jes' done hit to sorter come hit ovah me 'cause I'd been so hahd set agin sendin' Sally Ann away.

"I didn't take a fit ovah de letter an' dat kinder got nex' to Lindy. Fum dat time she cooled off to'ds me an' stopped drappin' in.

"Time went on, an' Sally Ann kep' gittin' aidgecated. One mawnin' las' summer Ros'bel come ovah to he'p me put up some p'serves. 'Who you reckon come home las' night?' says Ros'bel as she stepped in de do'.

"Dat question always makes me madder'n a wet hen 'cause hit's de bigges' fool question er de whole bunch er fool questions, so I didn't answer, but jes' went on i'nin' one er Cunnel Slocumses shirts.

"'Sally Ann,' says Ros'bel, seein' I wouldn't nibble at de bait. 'She come home on s'prise 'cause de white woman what tuck care o' her am daid, an' Sally Ann 'ud had to go to wuk ef she stayed up No'th.' At dat I couldn't help chucklin'. 'Has you done seen her?' say I. 'Yes, I done seen her,' says Ros'bel, 'an' Lawd! de airs

dat coon does put on! Tol' me please to don't call her Sally no mo'. Up No'th dey called her Sarah. An' she talks prissy, tryin' to soun' like Miss Fanny an' dem. Hit gimme a pain to listen, so I come away soon. I ain't gwine to have folks rear dey haid back an' look down to'ds de end of dey nose when dey speaks to me.'

"Fum dat I jes' 'bout see what Lindy wuz gwine to have to put up wid. Co'se I'd done wanned her how 'twould be, but jes' de same I ain't de kin' to crow ovah folks.

"Me an' Lindy bein' bad fren's I didn't drap over to see de prodigal. But Ros'bel kept me infawmed of de doin's of dat blame fool gal an' her stuck-up notions. 'She's got some sort er doin's to monkey rou'n on her fingernails wid, says Ros'bel, an' she breshes her teeth same as white folks. She brung a passel er books wid her an' sets up by de winder all day long lookin' at 'em pretendin' to read, cause she couldn't 'a' learnt all dat printin' in two years.'

"Dat's what I heerd from Ros'bel. She said Sally Ann batted her eyes when she talked, like as if cinders wuz blowin' up in her face, all de time goin' on 'bout de No'th dis an' de No'th dat, till I knowed hit must 'a' touched Lindy on de raw.

"Hit ran along dat way fo' 'bout a month, Sally Ann playin' lady an' Lindy swallowin' hit in silence, till Alex got took wid de fever, an' hit was work er go hungry wid Miss Sally Ann, 'cause her mammy wasn't takin' in enough to feed 'em all. Hit was jes' nip-an-tuck wid 'em. I buried de hatchet an' walked ovah to Lindy's one mawnin'. I could see she was took back consi'dable when I walked in, but she didn't let on. We passed de time er day an' talked 'bout Alex fo' a while, an' bine-by I come straight an' says: 'Lindy, Miss Fanny wuz axin' me 'bout gitti'n her a cook, 'cause de old one's gwine to leave her an' she's fixin' fer to break a new one in.' Lindy tried wid all her might to look like 'twant nothin' to her ef Miss Fanny wanted a dozen cooks, but you could jes' see de anxiousness stickin' out all over her. 'What you reckon she pays?' says Lindy, sorter keerless like. 'Dey wa'nt nothin' said about pay,' I told her; she jes' said

cook, dat's all, an' I wuz thinkin' ef Sally Ann would like to try, hit would make a mighty good staht fo' her.'

"'Sally Ann's got diffent ideas 'bout makin' a livin',' commence Lindy, but she didn't git no farther ways 'long, 'cause I walked all over her an' de outcome wuz dat when Sally Ann come home—she wuz out when I spoke wid Lindy—dey settled hit between 'em, an' Sally Ann set in at Miss Fanny's a-Monday mawnin, aidge-cation an' all.

"On Tuesday I wuz up at Slocumses to he'p wid de cleanin', like I always does when I heerd Miss Fanny tellin' Sally Ann what to fix fo' dinner. 'Ceptin' fo' a hen dat wuz to be cooked wid rice, dey wa'nt much to do, an' a baby in ahms could 'a' got dat dinner blin'folded. Miss Fanny tol' her all 'bout how to fix de hen an' den she lef' Sally Ann an' come on in de house wid me.

"When time come to dish up I wuz back in de kitchen settin' down sorter sociable like, tryin' to strike up a confab wid dat nigger jes' to show her she couldn't be puttin' on dog when I wuz aroun'.

"But she wouldn't strike up. Jes' acted like one er dese circus queens on pay day an showed de whites er her eyes at me ev'y now an' den. I felt like smackin' her jaws fo' her, but I didn't let on. Bine-by heah come Miss Fanny in de kitchen an' say: 'Viney, spose you sorter he'p Sally Ann wid de dishin' up today, 'cause she's new an' we'll give her a little lift at fust. I upped an' put on a clean apron an' got ready fo' to carry in de food. I must say dat I wuz s'prised at how nice dat hen looked layin' back in de rice an' ready to carve. De Cunnel he always does de carvin' 'cause can't no one do hit to please him.

"I sot de hen on de table an' stood back er Cunnel Slocum waitin' to pass de plate roun'. Dey wuz a young gen'lman—one er de gals' beaux—what had drapped in unexpected like, an' dey had invited him to stay an' eat wid 'em.

"Cunnel Slocum wuz busy sharpenin' de carvin' knife. Pretty soon I seen him take de fork in his hand, rear back like he always do befo' he starts de actual carvin', ram hit down in de hen's bosom, an' gr-r-r! You

know how hit soun's when you scrape yo' foot on a bed er wet gravel, 'ceptin' dis was ten times wusser! Ev'ybody looked up puzzled like. Cunnel Slocumses face turned de color of ripe watahmillion meat, an' he let out de only damn I's evah heerd him say 'fo' any one but de fam'ly. Sally Ann had cooked dat hen widout openin' hit, an' de Cunnel had run into de gizzard!

"He tried to han' me de dish quick befo' de comp'ny seen hit, but his intentions wuz too late. Eve'ybody had got a look at de hen an' hit didn't need no spyglass to see what wuz de matter when hit wuz unkivered fum de rice. I took de plate out, an' sot hit on de kitchen table right under Sally Ann's nose. I 'lowed she'd git all dat wuz comin' to her fum Miss Fanny, so I helt my tongue. I carried in some sliced ham, but eve'ybody's appetite sorter simmered down after dat hen-happenin', an' pretty soon dey riz up an' went in de settin' room, Miss Fanny lookin' jes' as calm's if nothin' had happened. But I knowed Sally Ann wasn't gwine to weah out no shoe leather at Slocumses. An' she didn't.

"I wuz at Lindy's dat afternoon to take Alex a bottle er blackberry cordial when Sally Ann come trailin' in. Hit was dark in de room an' she didn't rec'nize me ovah in de cornder.

"I's done give up my position at dem Slocumses,' wuz de way she 'nounced herse'f, "cause I wuz aidgecated fo' higher things. I's done changed my mind 'bout bein' a common cook.' 'Fo' de Lawd's sake,' says Lindy, 'you ain't done gone an' lef' Miss Fanny?' At dat I spoke up. 'Done lef' Miss Fanny?' says I, mockin' Lindy; 'yes she's done lef' her. Left her like a cottridge leaves a gun—cause she was kicked out,' says I, an' when I spoke up an' Sally Ann rec'nized who hit wuz she might' nigh jumped out er her skin. 'Don't you try to come nothin' on no one in front o' me, niggah,' says I. 'You needn't wall yo' eyes 'roun' at me, fo' yo' is a niggah, an' you's mighty nigh a white livered one at dat. Me an' yo' mammy's got mo' sense tucked under our little fingernails dan you is under yo' whole nappy haid. All yo' aidgecation,' says I, 'ain't kep' you fum sendin' a hen onto Miss Fanny's table wid de insides lef' in hit jes' like de Lawd

made hit.' At dat Sally Ann dropped her haid an' Lindy looked like she was mighty nigh ready to drap in her tracks.

"'All yo' aidgecation,' I kep' on, 'ain't learnt you no respec' fo' you' hahd-wu'kin' mammy what borned you an' has tuck de trouble er raisin' you. You knows how to han'le a pen'—I come close to her—'but you can't bake a batch er biscuits, can you?'

"'No'm,' says Sally Ann, squirmin'.

"'You knows how to shine up yo' nails like white folks, but you can't beat up a plain cup cake, can you?'

"'No'm' says Sally Ann, squirmin' some mo'.

"'You knows how to set up by de winder and show off to folks how you can read printin', but yo' hain't never done a week's washin', has you?'

"'No'm,' says Sally Ann.

"'What good is all yo' aidgecation doin' you ef hit ain't learnt you some sense?' says I. 'You's done gone an' disgraced Miss Fanny an' dem 'fo' comp'ny, dat's what you's done. Quit yo' cryin',' says I, for she begin to sniffle at dat: "taint no use fo' to howl ovah spilt milk. Ef you is got a mossel er sense left in you what ain't been aidgecated out of you, you's gwine to drap yo' persnickety ways an' git down to business an' show what kin' er stuff you's made of.'" Viney paused for breath.

"All dat happen las' summer," she resumed presently. "How come me to tell you 'bout hit I was aimin' to ax you to step in an' tas'e a piece er lemon custid dat ud melt in yo' mouf. Sally Ann baked hit an' sent hit ovah to me dis mawnin'."

"Sho' nough?" breathed Uncle Peter.

Viney chuckled. "She's been cookin' fo' Miss Fanny evah sence I tuck her in hand an' put aidgecation out er business. Now come on in an' tas'e dat custid pie." And Viney swung the gate open for Uncle Peter.

The Equalizing Bug.

"You, Sodom an' Gomarrah! Run in de house an' shoo dem chickens out'n de parlor! Run, I tell you! De las' time de rooster wuz in dere he pecked all de wheat trimmin's off'n my Sunday hat an' he was sick fo' a week."

The twins rose from the steps where they had been teasing an old brindle dog, and made for the parlor with some speed.

A loud, cackling noise issued from within. Shrill cries of "Shoo! Shoo!" were heard, and presently several hens made a hasty exit from the cabin, screaming thier indignation as they ran.

"I doesn't like fo' dem chickens to git in de habit o' goin' in de parlor," explained Viney to Uncle Peter, who sat with her on the shady porch of the little dwelling. "One of de Plymuff Rock hens tuck a notion to roos' dere reg'lar, an' de preacher drappin' in 'bout dusk one day, mistook her fo' a cushion an' set down on her. Since den I has been mo' p'tic'lar wid dem chickens an' tries to keep 'em out heah wid me."

She rocked in silence for a moment, her eye roving over Uncle Peter's attire. "Pears like to me, Uncle Petah, you is pow'ful diked out fo' de middle o' de week. How come? You ain't gwine co'tin', is you?"

Uncle Peter drew himself up with dignity. "I's gwine to de speakin' at de church tonight," was his response, "an' dat's how come me to drap in. I stopped by to ax is you an' Isom gwine to be dere."

"Does you mean dat yaller 'ooman what come down fum Bosting to speak on de Negro Question, as she calls hit?"

Uncle Peter nodded.

"Lindy Jackson was up heah dis mawnin'," said Viney, "tellin' me 'bout how de 'ooman come to call on her yistiddy, an' talked to her'n Alec 'bout how de white folks has tromped on us till dey has mighty nigh de-

structioned our will power, an' dat we'll go on dat-a-way until Gab'el blows his hawn, ef we don' cas' off de yoke an' equalize ourselves.

“Equalize ourselves wid whut?’ I ax her.

“Wid de white folks,’ says Lindy.

“Why, Lindy Jackson, I says, ‘I’s so plum’ ’shamed o’ you dat I kin feel myself blushin’. What you reckon Mis’ Fanny an’ dem’ll say ef dey hears ’bout dis equalizin’ business? Ain’t you got ’nough sense, niggah, to know dat dey ain’t a-gwine to be no right-down equalizin’ till us coons stops bein’ borned wid black skins an’ kinky hair?’ But, laws! I mought as well saved my breff, cause Lindy’s done been hit by de equalizin’ bug an’ de effectks o’ de bite’ll jes’ nachully have to wear off.

“Oncet,” continued Viney, meditatively, “I was bit by de same bug; but de bite didn’t take on me.

“Mis’ Fanny had a young lady visitin’ her fum de No’th, what tuck sick wid an’ arrangement of de stomach while she was at de Slocumses. I forgits what de doctor called hit, but seem to me lak he say hit was tar. Yes, dat was hit—tar of de stummick.

“I he’ped Mis’ Fanny nuss her, an’ she tuck sich a likin’ to me dat when her mammy come down to tote her back No’th again, as soon’s she was able to travel, Miss Amy—dat’s her name—jus’ carried on somethin’ awful, till I promise to go back wid ’em an’ stay dere till Mis’ Fanny an’ de Cunnel’d come fo’ me on dey way home fum New Yawk, whar dey was intendin’ to go in ’bout a month.

“Hit was my fus’ ride on a rai’road train; an’ I cain’t say dat I’m so crazy ’bout ridin’ behime a injine dat I’m achin’ fo’ to take dat trip again. All de time dat I was layin’ back on de seat, too sick to hol’ up my haid, I kep’ thinkin’ dat ef I was intendin’ to ever git home agin I’d have to take de same trip back; an’ thinkin’ of hit made me feel ’bout a hunnerd times wusser.

“Well, all things has to come to a en’, an’ bimeby we come to de gittin’ off place. Dey was so many people an’ street-cyars an’ wagons, an’ so much noise, dat I ax Miss Amy’s ma ef hit was a circus in town—hit was win-

ter, so I knowed hit couldn't be de Fofe o' July. An' she jes' laugh an' tell me hit's dat-a-way all de time in de city, 'cep'n Sundays.

"When we drove up to de house hit was so gran' hit mos' tuck my breff away. Dey wa'n't no use fo' me to p'ten' lak as if I'd seen somep'n o' de kin' befo', 'cause I hadn't.

"De place was so chuck full er fine doin's an' all sorts er things to make folks comf'table, dat hit kep' me oneasy de whole time I was dere.

"My room was right off'n Miss Amy's, so's I could hear her ef she called in de night; an' even when she commences to git well an' was pickin' up fas' dey made me keep de room, though I didn't feel right stayin' in such a fine one.

"In de daytime she an' her ma would take me out in de ca'iage wid 'em an' show me de sights; but of a evenin' I mos'ly wanted to stay in my room, 'count er de homesickness an' feelin' so strange. After supper, 'stid er talkin' wid de cook an' de res' er de white servants, I'd slip up to my room an' set back in de dark, thinkin' 'bout Susannah, an' Henry Clay, an' de twins, an' how Isom'd be settin' out here by de honeysuckle vine pickin' on de banjo, an' de neighbors drappin' in to ax how I is gittin' 'long—Miss Amy writ home fo' me every week—till, Lawd! seem lak I couldn't stan' hit another minute.

"'Mong de folks what come to de house a whole lot to see Miss Amy was a lady what dey call' Miss Short, an' she like to pestered de life out'n me, axin questions 'bout de Souf, an' how did I lak hit, an' all 'bout my fam'ly an' how we lives. Sometimes while we'd be a-talkin' she'd put down some writin' in a little book o' her'n; an' den she'd go on wid de questions, same as a lawyer in co't.

"At fus' I didn't lak hit; but when I begin to git so lonesome hit sort er made me feel better to talk 'bout home an' all, an' so when Miss Short'd start me to talkin' my mouf'd go lak a mill clapper.

"One day Miss Short stopped in an' ax ef she could

tote me over to a club meetin' dat was to be held at de house of a fr'en' o' her'n. She say dey was gwine to be a talk on de Negro Question an' maybe I'd want to hear hit. As I was sorter cur'ous to know what hit was to be lak, an' Miss Amy an' dem say fo' me to go, I went.

"When we got to de house whar de meetin' was to be, Miss Short brung a heap er ladies up an' induced me to 'em as Mis' Harris. Hit sho' did mek me feel queer to be called Mis' by dem white folks; an' I couldn't he'p but think what de Slocumses'd say ef dey'd 'a' heard it.

"De cheers was all lined up in rows in de parlor, an' dey had made a sort er flatfom up at de far en' o' de room. I was give a seat in de front row.

"Befo' long a man sot down at de pianner an' begin to play. De piece sounded familious to me, sorter lak hit mought 'a' been S'wanee Rivah wid trimmin's; 'cause every time he was 'bout to git into de piece he'd side-track an' run his fingers up an' down over de keys, like he'd los' de tune an' was tryin' to fin' hit, an' den he'd come down kabang—mad, I reckon, 'cause he couldn't git a holt right. But befo' he got plum' to de en' hit did turn out to be S'wanee Rivah after all, 'cause he quit all dat monkey business an' give us de real thing so sweet hit gimme de homesickness wuss'n ever.

"After him dey was a young lady what sang—but no one knowed what de song was 'bout—an' den a boy played on de fiddle. Pretty soon a stoutish lady come out on de flatfom; an' by de way de folks roun' me was whisperin' I knowed she was de one what was down on de bills fo' de Negro Question.

"When she fus' swung into her speech she used so much language I couldn't make out much of what she was sayin'; but after while she warmed up to de subjec' an' I could tell mo' what she was talkin' 'bout 'cause she drapped some er de language.

"'Part of my inflammation,' she says, 'I got fum a fren' o' mine'—an' she cas' a look at Miss Short—'but de mos' of hit I got at fus' hand, 'cause I spent a week in de Souf once, studyin' up on de subjec'.'

"Den she started in fo' to tell 'em how mistreatedened

us cullud folks is, an' how we is kep' in igromance an' darkness by de white folks. 'Hit's a awful thing,' she says; 'an' de sad part is dat dey jes' goes 'long enjoyin' life, an' seems to be puffedly happy. Co'se I doesn't blame dem lak I blames de white folks what dey lives 'mongst, an' de mo' I thinks of dem po' negroes de bad-der I feels. I has visited 'roun' wid 'em an' et wid 'em at dey own tables, an' I knows whayof I speaks when I says I feels sorry fo' 'em. But dey's a time comin' when de white folks what dey lives near'll be called befo' de Judgment Seat to 'count fo' all what dey ain't done. Dey is de ones what's de fault of dey cullud sistern an' bred-ern bein in darkness. Dey is de ones what 'fuses to raise up de black race into de light an' treat 'em as equals ——'

"Well, she was jes' a-tearin' hit off, an' all de time I knowed she was aimin' a backhanded jab at de Slo-cumses. I wasn't goin' to set back lak a tame rabbit an' hear her pickin' on my white folks lak dat. No, sir! Not ol' Viney. I jumps up fum my cheer.

"'White 'ooman, stop!' says I. You stop right whar you is, er you an' me'll be de wussest kin' er bad fren's.' I walked roun' to de front an' all de folkses' moufs drapped wide open, but I wasn't carin'. I kep' right on.

"'Long as you wants to speak 'bout dis here Negro Question an' jes' sticks to de fac's 'bout us niggahs I ain't got no quarrel wid you, 'cause I knows we cain't come nowhar near toein' de mark wid de white folks. Long as you wants to worry 'bout us bein' happy an' enjoyin' life 'cause we don't know what's on de inside of book-kivvers, why, dat's yo' business, an' I ain't got no quar'l wid you. I knows good an' well when de time comes fo' us niggers to equalize ourselves we's a-gwine to do hit of our own free will, jes' de way you white folks has done wid yo'selves, an' we don't need no one to keep punchin' us in de back fo' to make us move up faster, no mo' dan you white folks does. You-all riz up 'cause de feelin' was bawnd on de inside of you what made you rise, an' dat's de way we's a-gwine to do hit—jes' 'cause we'll feel dat-a-way fum de inside. You ain't trompin'

on anyone's feelin's talkin 'bout hit, though, an' you can say whatever you wants to 'bout us niggers ez long's hit's in front of our backs. But when you commences pickin' on my white folks, an' dey ain't here to take keer of deyselves, dat's a diff'unt thing. I ain't a-gwine to set by wid my mouf shet when dat happens, 'cause ef hit hadn't 'a' been fo' Mis' Fanny an' de res' er de Slocumses I don't know whar I'd be now. Whenever I is in trouble I knows whar to go. Whenever I needs a li'l' piece er money I knows who to ax fo hit. Ef Isom gits out of a job er de chillens is sick I knows who'll give me vittles an' medicine. Hit's de Slocumses; an' I'd lay down on de groun' an' let any of 'em walk on my ol' black neck ef dey tuck a notion to. Co'se you-all is mighty nice ladies, but you ain't like Mis' Fanny an' dem. Dey is quality, dey is. Why, befo' Mis' Fanny'd nose aroun' to see how we is livin', er set down to meals wid us in our houses, lak dis lady says she done, er have me at a club meetin' o' her'n—'cep'n it'd be to pass roun' de 'freshments—she'd drap in her tracks.'

“Jes' den I stopped fo' a minit to git my breff. I happen to look up to'ds de far en' o' de room, an' settin' back in de cornder, as nachul as life, was Mis' Fanny an' de Cunnel!

“I let loose one holler an' wid dat de Negro Question went out er my haid as clean as ef hit had been shot by a gun. Wid one jump—leas'ways hit seemed dat way to me—I was 'longside of e'm, grabbin' Mis' Fanny by de han', an' squeezin' hit, an' shakin' hit up an' down till hit looked like I was gwine plum' crazy. I was carryin' on so fo' gladness. All of a sudden hit come over me dat here I had been shootin' off my lip right befo' Mis' Fanny an' de Cunnel as biggity as you please, an' I got so 'shamed er myself I like to died. All I could say was: 'Lordy, Mis' Fanny, honey, please you an' Cunnel Slocum 'scuze me. I hope I may die ef I knowed you was here,' over an' over ag'in; an' de buzzin' an' talkin' was goin' on all roun' us.

“Mis' Fanny tol' me to don't talk no mo' but to git my hat an' come on' wid dem. She wouldn't let me

'splain nothin', an' every time I'd start fo' to tell 'em 'bout hit she an' de Cunnel'd bite dey lips an' turn dey huids away an' tell me dat'll do, dey knowed all 'bout hit.

"De way dey happen to be at de meetin', as I foun' out later, dey had come in on a s'prise on de aft'noon train, an' Miss Amy's ma had brung 'em over to de place whar I was." Viney paused.

"We tuck de train fo' home de nex' day. I ain't never set eyes on any of dem equalizers since an' I ain't missin' 'em any."

Up from the road came the full-toned, rhythmic chant of black workmen toiling with their picks in the sun.

"Dey's only one negro question dat I has ever give much o' my min' to'ds gittin' answered," Viney said.

"What am dat?" Uncle Peter turned a curious gaze on the speaker.

"Hit's 'Isom, has you brung yo' week's wages home?" " was Viney's response.

Helping Rosabel.

“Come right in, Mis’ Henderson. Laws, you shore is a sight fo’ sore eyes. You’ll have to ’scuse de disapp’eance of dis room. De chillen been a-litterin’ up de place till it looks like a cyclone struck hit. I tell ’em dat de Good Book say: ‘Dey’s a time when patience ceases to be a moniment,’ but dey don’t listen no mo’n a rabbit. Dey’s lak dey daddy. He’s got de disposition to be tidy, but he jes’ don’t use it.

“Ain’t hit warm? I declare to gracious de preparation’s a-drippin’ off me like a shower. Yes’m, I’d be feelin’ tollable well if hit wasn’t fo’ de miz’ry in my bress’, but I ain’t done so much washin’ lately, so de hurtin’ kind slowed up on me.

“Ain’t you heard I done give up de Slocumses’ washin’? Yes’m, last Wednesday a week ago. It’ll be fourteen years next November, if I lives an’ nothin’ happens, since I first took in dey washin’, and if hit hadn’t ’a’ been fo’ dat fool niggah Ros’bel, I’d be ironin’ de Slocumses’ clothes dis minute.

“How come Ros’bel mixed up in it? Well, dat’s what I’m goin’ to tell you, but every time I speak dat flouncin’ gal’s name I wants to spit.

“You see, all de trouble come along of her tryin’ to git de new preacher over at de Shiloh Baptis’ church to pop de question. He’d been keepin’ comp’ny wid huh fo’ over a month, an’ hit begin to look lak he was a little backwa’ds. Ros’bel bein’ a orphtan an’ not havin’ no one to look after huh I kinder took pity on huh an’ let huh spend a good deal o’ time at my house.

“One mawnin’ I was ironin’ a dress of Mis’ Fanny’s—I always call Mis’ Slocum Mis’ Fanny—when Ros’bel comes in. De dress was one of dese Maxicum drawed-work pieces, de kind dat’s fix all over like a rockin’ chair tidy, an’ I knows it cost a sight o’ money. De Cunnel brung hit to Mis’ Fanny when he come back fum one of his trips, an’ she set a heap o’ store by hit.

“Well, Ros’bel ain’t no sooner’n clap her eyes on dat dress den she like to had a fit. She ask me how much I’d take to let huh wear hit dat aft’noon, ’cause de preacher was goin’ to call an’ he’d shore have de blind staggers of de heart if he’d see huh in hit.

“She come at me so suddent-like I didn’t scarcely know what to do. I ain’t never lent out any of Mis’ Fanny’s good dresses, an’ huh askin’ me dat way kinder put me to hit. I jes’ argyfyed dis hyah way: Mis’ Fanny she’s rich an’ got a plenty, but Ros’bel’s a orphan, an’ de preacher might be de chanst of her life. ‘But den again,’ I says, ‘sposen’ something happens to dat dress!’ Dere I stood ’sputin’ wid my se’f, an’ all de time Ros’bel a-talkin’ me into lettin’ huh wear de dress till I was plum’ addled, an’ de end of hit was dat I finally give in. But first I made huh mighty nigh swear de skin off’n huh tongue dat she’d take good care of de dress an’ not let hit come to no harm.

“I ’member de time I let de folks over at de straw-be’y festibul have one of Mis’ Fanny’s baffinbug tidies fo’ de table, an’ how I had to scorch it wid a hot iron to cover up de place where a stain was made on hit, an’ den p’ten’ to Mis’ Fanny lak I scorched it by axdent. So I made dat gal promise me some mighty tall promissements. I knowed de dress was servin’ in a good cause an’ dat kind of kept me fum feelin’ so oneasy ’bout hit.

“Well, a little after dinner, here comes Ros’bel to my house all ready exceptin’ de dress, ’cause I wouldn’t trust huh to git in it by huhse’f. It was a blessin’ she come early—leastways I thought so den—for hit took till de end of kingdom come to hook huh in dat dress. I had to be so careful ’cause hit was a clost fit, an’ by de time I finished hookin’ hit I knowed where de name ‘drawed work’ come fum, fo’ hit mighty near drawed my nails out by de roots gittin’ dat dress on Ros’bel.

“But when de job was done dat gal shore did look fine! She knowed hit, too, an’ de way she switched up an’ down in front o’ de glass, an’ grin at huhse’f lak a possum was a sight.

“While I was standin’ by, miratin’ over her an’

tellin' huh to play huh cards right an' she'd git de preacher easy, I saw a carriage drive up in front, an' a lady step out an' come in de gate. 'Ros'bel,' says I, 'ain't dat a white lady comin' in de gate?'

"'Yes'm,' says Ros'bel.

"'Laws-a-mussy.' says I, wonderin' who it was. 'I ain't fitten to see no ladies.' An' wid dat I kinder straighten myself out intendin' to step to de do.'

"An' den, what you reckon dat fool niggah done? It jes' takes one o' dese here yaller niggahs to act dat-a-way. De black ones ain't so no-'count an' flutter-headed. She was so anxious to show huhse'f, no sooner did a knock come, dan she flung open de do'. An' dere stands Mis' Fanny!

"De minute I rec'nize who hit was I tried to jerk Ros'bel back in de room an' git in front o' huh. But hit was too late. Mis' Fanny ain't no sooner'n set eyes on dat coon den dey bulge out till you could 'a' hung a hat on 'em, an' she jes' said, 'My dress!' But dey was mo' language in dem two words dan if sh'ed 'a' talked a week.

"Dere was so much happen after dat, it fairly made my brames spin roun'. Ros'bel screamed an' started to run, but Mis' Fanny was dat quick, she reached out an' catch her by de Maxicum drawed-work, an' helt on to huh. An' all de 'splainin' I was tryin' to do was jes' breff wasted. I never seen any one so hard-headed as white folks is.

"Mis' Fanny hung on to Ros'bel like a snappin' turtle, an' she wouldn't loose her holt till I peel de dress off dat no-'count niggah. I never was so much emba'ss'ment in all my bawn days.

"Den she makes me git all de rest o' de clothes an' have de driver pile 'em in de carriage. I had to send one of de chillen out de back way to de nex'-do' neighbor's to git one of Cunnel Slocumses' white vests dat I let Mr. Johnson have de night befo'.

"John, de driver, tol' me de nex' day dat Mis' Fanny had come to ask me 'bout a ol' cook o' her'n. But dat don't make no diff'ence. White folks got no busi-

ness pokin' roun' where dey don't belong, an' my 'pinion o' Mis' Fanny cert'nly fell since dat happen.

"But I knows one thing. If dat yaller-faced, triflin', no-'count niggah Ros'bel comes roun' here askin' me to help huh out in courtin' again, I'll have de law on huh!"

On Matrimony.

Dey am two kin' er folks what kin give you de bes' advice on de subje' er matrimony," said Viney to Uncle Peter—"dem what ain't neveh been in hit yit, an' dem what's been in an' done got out. De ones what am in de thick er hit mos' gen'ally keeps dey moufs shet an' lets de oders do de talkin'. Leas'ways, dats what I has always observated."

"How come you speakin' 'bout matrimony?" asked Uncle Peter as he shifted his position on the steps of the cabin porch.

"Ros'bel an' de preacher gwine to git ma'ied dis fall. Dat's how come," announced Viney.

Uncle Peter looked up in surprise.

"Who tol' you so?"

"Ros'bel tol' me," answered Viney.

"Well," was Uncle Peter's comment, "I knowed dey been keepin' comp'ny long 'nough, but I didn't know dey was imgaged."

"Who say dey's imgaged?" demanded Viney with some asperity.

"Why—why—" stammered Uncle Peter confusedly. "Ain't you jes' been an' said dat Ros'bel tol' you her an' de preacher gwine to git ma'ied dis fall?"

"Dat's what I said; but dat don't mek 'em imgaged, do hit?"

"Oh! "Uncle Peter leaned back against the post once more.

"Ros'bel was ovah heah yistiddy mawnin'," continued Viney, "axin' my 'pinion 'bout hit. She say dat hit's wuss wuk gittin' de preacher up to de poppin' point dan hit is to mek molasses run fas' in wintertime; but she's boun' fo' hit to happen soon er she'll know de reason why. An' dat's how come her to set nex' fall fo' de weddin'. I has been wonderin' ef she's gittin' hol' er de right pardner—not dat I got anythin' 'gainst de preacher, but dey's so many divo'cements dese days 'count er folks not bein' affinacies wid each other. Co'se Ros'bel been

gwine wid dat man long 'nough to fin' out all 'bout his cha'cter an' ef he's gwine to mek de right kin' er husban'; still, you can't never tell, an' dat's what started me to thinkin' 'bout de subje'.

"Evah sence de worl' was cr'ated dey ain't nothin' what yo' can't name dat folks ain't been an' worked some kin' er inprovediments on' 'cep'in' mat'imony. Ef Adam an' Eve tuck a notion to go to town of a Sat'day dey jes' up an' footed hit twel dey got dere. Now'days dey'd take de 'lectric cahs. Ef Eve wanted to tell Cain an' Abel dat her an' de ol' man was comin' ovah to take dinnah wid 'em nex' Thu'sday dey live so fur away dat she'd have to tell 'em while dey was takin' dinner wid 'em las' Thu'sday ef she want 'em to mek p'eparation fo' 'em. Now'days she'd call 'em up on de 'phome. Dat's de way hit is all along de line.

"But wid mat'mony, hit's been diffunt. De gal an' de man what gits ma'ied dis mawnin' ain't no fu'therways 'long in knowin' how dat ma'iage gwine to tu'n out dan Gawge Wash'n'ton was in knowin' 'bout de Newnited States when he sot out in a ship fo' to 'skiver 'em.

"De smahtes' man an' 'ooman in de country kin git j'ined an' have nothin' but de wussest kind er mizry; an' on de other han', de two bigges' fools dat de Lawd evah made kin marry an' git 'long lak a pair er turkey doves. Dat's de queer part of hit all!

"Two folkses kin go 'long wid each other yeah in an' yeah out; an' so long as de man don't have to pay de rent an' grocery bills an' de 'ooman don't have to ax him fo' to do hit, dey ain't nevah gwine to find out 'bout each other clean down to de roots. Hit takes livin' undah de same roof an' seein' 'one anothah wid de comp'ny manners laid off to do dat.

"Cunnel Slocum had a cousin livin' heah befo' Mis' Fanny an' him was ma'ied, by de name er Mis' Clara Winters. She was a fine lookin' young lady an' ev'ybody thought a heap o' her—specially Cap'n Bronson, one er de gen'l'men what b'long in Miss Clara's set. De mos' er Mis' Clara's time was tuck up tendin' to a imbalid ma—an' a right down cranky one at dat, not wantin' Mis'

Clara to go nowheres er have de littles' mite er pleasure. Spite er dat, Cap'n Bronson an' she was sweethearts; an' in 'tween times dey got a chancet to do dey co'tin'. De cap'n was plum foolish 'bout her an' she 'bout him, but de ol' lady was boun' fo' to keep dem two fum gittin' ma'ied; an' whenever dey brung up de subjc' to her she'd git into one er her tantrums an' holler dat hit would kill her to give up her daughter—no mattah ef Mis' Clara an' de cap'n promise her ovah an' ovah agin dat dey'd stay right dere wid her after dey was ma'ied. She was so plum selfish dat she wouldn't give in, but jes' kep on sayin' dey would kill her ef dey talked 'bout hit. So, tho' dey didn't mention hit no mo', hit was a sort er understandin' 'tween 'em dat after de ol' lady'd drapped off dey'd go 'haid an ma'y—not dat Mis' Clara was de kind to say a thing lak dat right smack out, but I reckon dat was what dey bofe was thinkin' down in dey hearts, an' hit didn't need no words to spress hit.

“Eve'y Sunday aft'noon Cap'n Bronson'd turn in at de Winters' gate; an' he'd have a gre't big bunch er flowers outen his own gyarden fo' Mis' Clara, ef hit was in de summertime. Den, by-an'-by, you'd see dem two come outen de gate—an' a fine-lookin' couple dey was!—an' walk on out to de graveyahd, where dey'd set down under de trees an' he'd read out loud to her fum a book or else dey'd jes' set 'longside er each othah—not sayin' nothin' but jes' settin' quiet an' peaceful-lak.

“Fo' eighteen yeahs dem two was imgaged. Eve'y yeah folks would say: ‘De ol' lady cain't las' twel spring, an' when she goes dem two'll have a weddin.’ But, bless yo' life, hit look lak she was jes' keepin' alive fo' spite to p'vent dat match; an' as de yeahs went on Mis' Clara's hair commence to git all streaked up wid gray, an' she look wo' out an' thin.

“All things has to come to a en', an' one fine mawnin' de news went roun' dat ol' Mis' Winters had gone thoo de Big Gate. De fus' thing eve'ybody say when dey hearn 'bout hit was: ‘Now dem two folks kin git ma'ied!’ An' dat's what dey done soon after, tho' Mis' Clara wanted to wait twel de yeah of mo'nin' was ovah; but de cap'n wouldn't hear to hit.

Now de curious part er de whole business is comin'. Dem two lived together 'bout six months, when dey broke up housekeepin'. Cap'n Bronson went back to his bo'din'-house an' Mis' Clara tuck up in de cottage where she lived befo' her ma died. A yeah after, dey got a divo'cement 'count er havin' incapable tempahs—dat's what I hearn Mis' Fanny say was de cause of hit. No one nevah did know jes' egzackly de trouble, 'cause dey was bofe so close-moufed; but ef a bolt er lightning had struck de town, folks couldn't 'a' been mo' s'prized when dem two busted up ! Heah was a man an' a 'ooman what had knowed each othah goin' on twenty yeahs an' was imged eighteen outen de twenty; an' ef any one had a chancet fo' to find out 'bout de cha'cter of de other dem two suttently had."

"So fur as I kin mek hit out, dey's on'y one rule fo' to follow in mat'imony," said Uncle Peter.

"What's de rule?" asked Viney.

"Hit's dis: Dat dey ain't no rule!"

Out On Bail.

“Hit was de winter dat Sally Ann lef’ de Slocumses an’ Mis’ Fanny was mighty nigh tuck down wid nervous prospection tryin’ to git aholt of a good cook,” said Vin-ey. “Two tuck sick on her, fo’ of ’em married on her, three was hiahed away by some fr’en’s o’ her’n, an’ dere’s o’ de lot was jes’ so nachully no ’count dat Mis’ Fanny turned ’em loose quicker’n a red-hot poker.

“Ef hit hadn’ ’a’ been dat Buddy was laid up at de time wid a spell o’ fever I could ’a’ stayed wid her reg’lar; but, as hit was, all I could do was to help her out, now an’ den.

“One evenin’ Cunnel Slocum brung a fr’en’ o’ his’n—a jedge— home wid him; an’ whiles dey was settin’ roun’ de table after supper confabbin’ ’bout dis an’ dat—I was cl’arin’ de dishes off de table—de talk turned on Mis’ Fanny’s troubles.

“ ‘Ef I could git a good cook fo’ Fanny,’ says de Cunnel, ‘I’d be willin’ to pay mos’ any price, even if I had to hiah her right outen de debil’s kitchen an’ nail her shoes to de flo’ to keep her here.’

“De jedge chuckled. ‘You won’t have to go dat far,’ says he; ‘fo’ right oveh heah at de county jail is a cook what could win a passpo’t into Heaven if Saint Peter would stop takin’ in tickets long enough to eat a meal o’ her’n.’

“ ‘At de county jail!’ says bofe Mis’ Fanny an’ de Cunnel. ‘Does you mean she’s hiahed to cook fo’ dem prisonters?’

“ ‘Hiahed nothin!’ says de jedge. ‘She belongs dere ’cause she was tuck dere by de police. De way she happen to come in my haid, she was brung up befo’ me las’ week charged wid slashin’ up a coon till his face looked like a railroad map. De minit I clapt eyes on her I says to myself, ‘I’s seen dat niggah befo’,’ an’ ’twasn’t long till I placed her. She tole me dat she come to town on a scursion train, lookin’ fo’ a beau o’ her’n an’ a yaller gal; an’ dat she’d carved up de man—an’ now she’s keepin’

annuder razor sharp fo' de gal. De police what 'rested her said she was so full o' whisky when he ran 'crost her dat de word "drunk" would 'a' looked sober 'longside o' her. "Whar is you fum?" I says to her. "Marietta, Georgy," says she; an den hit come back to me whar I seen her. Hit was down at de hotel whar I always stops when I's passin' thoo dere; an' dey's a puddin' what dat niggah cooks called de Gin'l Lee puddin' what makes a man feel like Adam mus' 'a' felt in de Gyarden of Edom befo' de fall. "Why, you's Katie Belle!" says I; an' wid dat she let out a joy whoop an' mighty nigh fell on my neck. Rememberin' de puddin', I come near forgittin' I was a jedge; but de law has to be uphel', an' dat's how come she's in jail, waitin' fo' some one to bail her out.'

"Dey was a dead silence for a minute. 'What's de amount?' says Cunnel Slocum by-an'-by, sorter thoughtful like.

"'Ten dollahs,' says de jedge.

"'Well, by ginger, Fanny,' says de Cunnel, slammin' his fis' down on de table hard, 'I'm gwine to bail dat niggah out er jail an' bring her up heah to cook, an' de fus' pop out er de box dat she makes fo' to leave I'll clap her back into jail again—or, leasways, I'll tell her I'm a-gwine to. We'll see how dat wuks. So dis week she stahts in cookin' fo' de Slocum fam'ly, an' nex' Sunday we'll have de jedge up heah fo' dinnah to eat some Gin'l Lee puddin'!'—an' de Cunnel give de jedge a monst'us wink.

"Miss Fanny j'ined in de laff dat followed, sorter weaklike. 'Well,' she says, 'I reckon I been a failure in de cook-gittin' line long enough; so we'll see how de Cunnel's luck runs.'

"Dat was on a Chuesday. Wednesday aft'noon, whiles I was wipin' up de kitchen flo', I hears a noise on de back po'ch—blom! blom!—like as if a stove was walkin' up de steps. Dey was a knock at de do' an' when I open hit dere stan's de blackes', fattes' coon 'ooman what ever I sot eyes on. 'Aft'noon,' says she in de littles' squeaky voice. 'Aft'noon,' says I. 'I's de new cook what Cunnel Slocum sent up heah,' says she, an' wid dat she walks in de kitchen and takes a cheer. She was so fat dat she

look like she was standin' up when she was settin' down. I went after Mis' Fanny an' pretty soon she come down in de kitchen.

"'Howdy-do?' says Mis' Fanny, politelike, as all de quality is. 'Viney tells me dat you is de new cook.' An' she smile pleasantly.

"'Yes'm,' says de new gal, risin' up an' speakin' in dat little bitsy voice o' her'n. 'My name's Katie Belle; an' I hopes I can suit you.'

"'Co'se,' says Mis' Fanny, lookin' at her straight in de eye, 'you unstan's de 'greement what Cunnel Slocum made wid you?'

"'Yes, ma'am,' 'spon's Katie Belle, 'I does dat; an' fo' Gawd, Mis' Slocum, you-all ai'nt gwine to have no cause to send me back to de calaboose. I's done refawmed, I has; an' de debil ain't a-goin' to git no chance to claim me no mo'.'

"'Well, I tuck her an' showed her whar de things was, so's she could staht in gittin' supper; an' she set right to work.

"'I disremembers what all she cooked dat night, but I does remember dat when de fam'ly got up fum de table dey had eat so much dat dey all looked sorter swoll up an' pustylike; an' no one cared 'bout doin' much mo'n jes' settin' roun'.

"Dat was de beginnin' of a happy time fo' Mis' Fanny, an' in a little while all her fren's commence hearin' 'bout hit. I reckon dey'd mos' give dey haid to git Katie Belle away fum de Slocumses, but dis time de Cunnel had got hit fixed so dat dey couldn't play no such trick.

"He went roun' grinnin' like a chessy-cat at his fo'-sightedness an' Mis' Fanny wo' a peaceful look, like a pusson what's jes' come thoo at revival services. Somehow dey was an air 'bout de whole place like de fam'ly had come to de lan' o' Canaan. Dey wasn't sca'cely a meal dat dey didn't have half a dozen extrys at de table.

"Things was goin' on as slick as glass an' Thanksgiving was 'bout a week off, when Miss May adbvertise her imgagement in de papers—an' dey was plannin' fo' a big dinner an' a dance afterward on Thanksgiving night.

All o' de special fr'en's was invited to de dinner an' de unspecials was invited fo' later in de evenin'.

"Katie Belle was give full cha'ge o' de program fo' de meal; an' ef she didn't weah out de groc'ry boys, trottin' back an' fo'th bringin' stuff, hit wasn't her fault. Early Monday mawnin' she begin cookin'; an' fo' de res' o' de time no one couldn't sca'cely git a word out o' her. She jes' stalked roun' in de kitchen measurin' an' makin' up things—an' Mis' Fanny an' dem kep' out o' her way an' let her have de full swing o' dat program, 'cause dey knowed she was equal to hit.

"'When de big day come Mis' Fanny an' de gals dress up de dinin' room table wid all sorts er doin's an' declarations, like white folks gin'ally does, till hit looked like a picture in a book; an' den everybody went upstairs to fix deyselves up fo' de party.

"I got myself ready to deceive de guests at de front do' an' take keer o' de ladies' wraps an' b'longin's. Isom was hiahed fo' to take keer o' de gen'l'men's. Dey was fo' waiters from de hotel, three to ten' to de servin' an' one to po' out de drinkables; an' all Katie Belle had to ten' to was to git de food ready to pass hit on to de waiters as dey'd come in de kitchen fo' hit.

"Whiles de fam'ly was upstairs dressin' an' Cunnel Slocum was hollerin' like he always do—'Who's been an' tuck my shirtstuds fum de place whar I laid 'em down?'—an' Mis' Fanny findin' 'em right under his nose, like she always do, I steps out in de kitchen to see everything.

"Katie Belle was puttin' de finishin' touches to some salad an' she ain't even 'spon' to me when I say how fine de vittles look. Dere sot de turkey as big as you please, lookin' like he was jes' achin' to be et. One of de waiters had jes' come, an' as de kitchen look lak hit was gittin' sorter scrowged up, what wid de food an' de buckets o' ice settin' roun', wid de wine an' stuff coolin' in em' an' Katie Belle a-takin up some room herself, I went into de house.

"Hit wasn't long fo' de fam'ly come downstairs an' de folks begin to come; an' pretty soon dey was all seated at de table.

"Everybody was plaguin' Miss May, who was lookin'

as sweet as a peach an' blushin' lak a rose. Mistah Robert was pow'ful pleased at de jokin' an goin' on, an' every oncet in a while I seen him squeeze Miss May's han' under de table—I was watchin' de party fum de second landin' on de hall stairs.

“De waiters had gone out to bring in de sec'n' co'se an' hit look like to me dey was a-takin' a pow'ful long time to bring hit in. I notice a worried look on Mis' Fanny's face an' she pressed de buzz under de table three or fo' times; but dey ain't no one come. Den I seen her lean over an' say somthin' to de Cunnel. None o' de guestes seem to know anythin' was out er de way, 'cause dey was all enjoying deyselves—or, leastways, ef dey did dey wouldn't 'a' let on. Mis' Fanny press de buzz once mo'. No answer. Den she looked at de Cunnel. He was settin' nearest to de swingin' do'; an' at dat he riz up an' stahted fo' de kitchen.

“I seen him lay his han' on de do' to push hit back—when bang! crash!—de terribles' racket an' screamin' come thoo, like as if a thousand debils was tryin' to jump down one anodder's th'oats.

“Every one at de table jump to dey feet an' de young ladies begin to scream. Bang! bang! hit went on in de kitchen an' dem coon waiters back dere hollerin' at de top o' dey lungs to 'Don't kill 'em!' an' to 'Look out!' An' what wid de yellin' an' de crashin' o' glass an' sich, hit was a wuss hullabaloo dan a crazy house. De Cunnel stahted fo de kitchen do' an' Mis' Fanny try to pull him back by de coattails. He broke loose fum her finally an' de whole pile o' gen'l'men rushed in after him.

“Dere stood Katie Belle in de middle o' de kitchen flo', whoopin' like a Injun, wid a razor in each han'. She had broke into de drinkables an' busted thoo her bail, an' what was lef' o' de wine wouldn't 'a' drowned a flea comfor'ble. Ovah in a cornder on de far side o' de kitchen, away fum de do', was de fo' waiters, an' every time she'd wave one o' dem razors de whole gang would holler 'Murder!'

“De sight sorter froze Cunnel Slocum an' dem up stiff an' fo' a minute hit look lak everybody got pa'lyzed. De suddent entrance o' de gen'l'men had de same effec' on

Katie Belle, but she come to befo' dey did. As quick as a flash she made a dive fo' dem white folks an' dey all fell back into de dinin' room like dey was dat many ninepins. No sooner had she got dem off de fiel' dan she made fo' de waiters again, as we could tell fum de yellin' what opened up oncet mo'.

"Mr. Robert was de fus' one to pull hisse'f loose fum de bunch on de flo'; an' wid Miss May screamin' fo' him to come back he rush fo' de kitchen. He ain't no mo' dan push de do' open when—blap!—a tomato chuckfull o' yaller dressin' caught him on de nose an' ran down all over his fine clothes. He swo' sumpin' ter'ble an' open de do' again. Kerblam! Dis time a wine bottle come thoo, jes' missin' him by a inch an' knockin' ovah one o' Miss Fanny's fine vases on de mantel. At dat Mr. Robert gritted his teef an' pickin' up one er de dinin' room cheers, he knocked back de do' an' stahted fo' Katie Belle in de deades' earnes' what I ever sot eyes on.

"I has been to some parties myself where dey was a fight or two, but dey couldn't none of 'em hol' a candle to dis. While Mr. Robert was tryin' to distrack her 'tention an' git aholt o' dem razors by reachin' fo' her haid wid de cheer, de other gen'l'men run roun' to de back windows an' fix fo' to git her fum de rear; but dat coon was ready fo' 'em. De fus' one dat clum up in de window, she reach fo' de turkey an' give it to him in de face so hahd dat hit knocked de ambition plum' outen him an' he drapped down. While she was flingin' vittles at de ones tryin to come thoo de window, she was holdin' Mr. Robert off on de other side; an' de way dat kitchen an' dem folks was gormed up wid good food was a sight to make de angels weep.

"While de fracas was a-goin' on, an' nobody seem able to lay a han' on Katie Belle, a idea come over me dat I says I'll try.

"Ef she got in dat fix 'count er drinkin', maybe de thing would he'p us to git a-holt o' her; an' widout axin' Mis' Fanny any questions, I runs upstairs to de Cunnel's closet, where I knows he always keeps a bottle er brandy 'cause I is always in de habit o' takin' jes' a little tas'e when I's cleanin' up an' Mis' Fanny an' dem ain't lookin'.

“Sho’ ’nough, when I opens de do’, dere stan’s de bottle on de shelf. I jes’ tuck a little tas’e to make sure befo’ I tuck hit downstairs, an’ den I run fo’ de kitchen as fas’ as my laigs would tote me. Dey was a awful scream-in’ fum de ladies when dey seen me run up in front o’ Katie Belle, but I didn’t stop at dat. I jes’ stepped right up in front o’ her an’ helt de bottle up to her. Down come dat coon’s han’s, de razors draps to de flo’ an’ she grabbed fo’ dat bottle like greased lightnin’.

“Dat was when de fight come to a end. Fo’ den dey all closed in on her an’ after dat hit wasn’t long befo’ de police come an’ tuck her back to de county jail. Hit was wuss dan movin’ a piano, but dey finally got her out and peace come down on de house. De guestes was dat weak an’ outdid dat no one wanted to move fo’ a while; an’ by-an’-by de gen’l’men an’ ladies got to work to he’p clean up some er de mess.

“Every one patted me on de back; an’ when I got home dat night an’ counted up what dey all give me I had enough to finish payin’ fo’ de organ what I got on de installment plan.

“Hit tuck us a week to clean up de mess an’ a longer time dan dat fo’ de ladies nerves to git straighten’ out. I notice dat de Cunnel ain’t never been so spry since dat time ’bout monkeyin’ in Mis’ Fanny’s household business; an’ Katie Belle’s still a-waitin’ in de county jail fo’ some one to bail her out again.”

Rechristening Cornell.

“Cornell Un’vers’ty Jackson—dat was his name,” said Viney. “Wher’d Lindy git hit? Well, hit was up at her white folks’—de Buffo’dses—dat she runned ’crost hit. Her an’ Alec had been scrappin’ fo’ ’bout two months what dey was gwine to name de baby, an’ hit look lak dey jes’ couldn’ come to no ’greement. Alec wanted to name him one er de good ol’ Bible names like ‘Poleom er Jossy-way er Gawge Wash’n’ton; but Lindy had her mind set on callin’ him somep’n stylishlike an’ up to date. As fo’ me, I disadmiahs dese newfangled names; but my ’pinion wasn’t axed.

“Fum what Lindy say, de oldes’ Buffo’d boy was gwine ’way up No’t h fo’ de puppose er gittin’ some branches what he couldn’ git at home. Sounds plum foolish, don’ hit? An’ I tol’ Lindy she mus’ a got dat crooked, ’cause what in de name er kingdom come would he have to go ’way to git branches fo’—an’ all dem trees on Majah Buffo’d’s prop’ty? Dey is some, doin’s of white folks dat I ain’t p’tendin’ to un’erstan’, an dis one was one er de misun’erstandable ones.

“Lindy say dat, in all de talkin, what was goin’ on befo’ de young man went away, dey was one name she hearn ’em call a heap er times what sounded so tony an’ dif’unt fum any she evah knowed of dat she got Majah Buffo’d to write hit down on a piece er paper. ‘What you gwine to do wid hit, Lindy?’ say de majah, after he done writ hit an’ give hit to her. ‘I’s gwine to tack dat name on to Jackson,’ say Lindy, ‘an’ give it to de baby!’ So dat’s how come him to have hit. Alec kicked a mighty heap; but Lindy had her min’ set—an’ de name stuck.

“He was a puny li’l niggah; an’ hit’s my ’pinion dat he wa’n’t nachully dat-away, but dat hit was a punishment on Lindy fo’ ’posin’ herself to Alec ’bout not wantin’ no Bible name. ‘Count er him bein’ sickly twel he was ’bout five yeahs ol’, Lindy nevah would lay a han’ on him; an’ when he did git strong ’nough to take a good dressin’ down, Cornell had Lindy right under his thumbnail wid

a trick er his of screamin' like he was bein' killed no sooner'n she'd lif' up her han'. An' steal! Why ev'y time dat niggah'd bat his eyelids somep'n would fly up under 'em.

"De fus' time she caught Cornell at some er his tricks was when he went roun' to folks'es houses one Sunday mawnin' an' tuck de newspapers outen dey yahds fo' any one was up, an' den toted 'em in town an' sold 'em. Den, again, he coaxed Cunnel Slocum'ses brown water-spaniard dog out in de yahd, an', after paintin' de dog black wid a bottle er shoe polish, sold him to a man 'crost de river fo' a dollah. Hit was jes' one thing an' den another.

"One mawnin' I stopped by to see Lindy, an' I foun' huh all wukked up an' mad 'bout somethin'. Hit seem dat Cornell had drapped a half dollah outen his pants pocket on to de flo'; an' hit tuck Lindy nearly a hour to worm outen him whar hit come fum. Bimeby she got a holt er de trufe. Majah Buffo'd had give Cornell one er his vestes to take home an' have hit pressed, an' Cornell had rummaged roun' in de ves, an' foun' de piece er mon-ey in one er de pockets.

"'I tol' Cornell,' say Lindy, 'dat I had a good notion to have him soapeened to co't fo' takin' dat money. I went out in de yahd an' broke off a good, strong switch, while Sally Ann helt dat young un. Dey's a time fo' Scriptures an' a time fo' hick'ry limbs; an' one of 'em hadn't fetched him, so hit was de other one's tu'n. I whupped dat boy twel my ahms ached, fus wid one han' an' den wid de other; an' when I was plum wo' out, an' him howlin' an' sniffin, I say: "You's a-gwine to take dis heah piece er money on up to Majah Buffo'd dis aft'noon, 'cause he'll be home den; an' you's a-gwine to tell him how come you wid it—does you heah me?" "Yes'm," say Cornell. 'Does you b'lieve dat he's gwine to do hit?' I says to Lindy when she tol' me all dat. Well,' says Lindy, 'dey ain't nothin' lak tryin'.'

"Dat aft'noon Miss Fanny sent me ovah to de Buffo'dses wid a bokay of flowers in honah of Miss May an' Mistah Robert Buffo'd, as dey was 'spected home dat evenin' fum dey bridal tare. Miss Buffo'd sent me

in de hall wid 'em to put 'em in de big vase on de table; an' while I was standin' dere fixin' de flowers who does I see thoo de window but Cornell, comin' up de walk. De majah was settin' on de po'ch in one er de big rockers; an' when he seen Cornell I heerd him call out, 'Good aft'noon, Cornell Un'vers'ty. What kin I do fo' you dis aft'noon?'—teasin'like, as Majah Buffo'd always is. Cornell tuck off his cap an' come up de steps on de po'ch. 'I jes' thought I'd stop in an' see ef you-all is got any kin' er wuk you-all wants me to do fo' yo,' says Cornell, sorter stammerin' an' twistin' his cap roun' in his han's. 'Not today,' say de majah; 'but I mought have somethin' fo' you to do nex' week.' Cornell was fishin' down in his pocket by dat time, an' pretty soon he brung up de half dollah. 'Majah Buffo'd,' says he, 'you kin have dis!' An' wid dat, he helt out de money to de majah. Majah Buffo'd look pow'ful 'stonished fo' a minute, an' den he slap his knee an' set back in his cheer an' laugh an' laugh. 'What fo' you reckon I wants wid yo' money, Cornell?' he ask. 'I don' know, say' Cornell; 'but I jes' thought I'd give hit to you.' De majah stop laughin' all of a suddint an' straighten' up, lookin' Cornell in de eye hahd. 'Cornell Un'vers'ty, you's been an' stole dat money!' he say, jes' lak dat. 'Yes, suh,' say Cornell, widout blinkin' a eye. 'Does you want hit, Majah Buffo'd?' At dat, Majah Buffo'd reach ovah an' grab Cornell by de shoulder. 'You young rapsCALLION!' he say; 'you knows I don't want dat money. Who did you steal hit fum?' 'Fum a white man,' say Cornell. 'When?' ask de majah, sharp and short. 'Dis mawnin',' say Cornell. 'Den you take dat piece er money an' give hit back to de man what you stoled it fum,' de majah tol' him. 'Dat's what I done dis aft'noon,' say Cornell, lookin' him right square in de eye; 'I tuck hit back an' offer hit to him an' he wouldn't tek hit.'

At dat de majah let loose er Cornell an' set back in his cheer. 'Well,' says he, 'ef dat's de case, why, dey ain't nothin' mo' to be said. An heah's a dime fo' you, 'cause you's done been an' confessed yo' sin. Hit shows dat you's got back on de right road, even ef you did git side-

tracked.' 'Thanky, suh!' say Cornell; an' puttin' de money in his pocket he lit out.

"I say to myse'f: 'I hates to mix in an' carry tales; but ef 'twas one er my chillen, an' Lindy knowed 'bout hit, I'd thank her fo' tellin' me.' An' as soon as I could I went right on down to Lindy's. No sooner'n I had got in de room dan Lindy say: 'Viney, what you reckon? Cornell went right on up to Buffo'ds' lak I tol' him, an' Majah Buffo'd say fo' him to keep de money, an' give him a dime besides, fo' bein' honess' 'bout hit!' Dat was one drap in de bucket too much fo' me, an' after 'sputin' wid myse'f some I jes' up an' tol' Lindy de straight of hit. At fus, Lindy jes' lost her tongue. Den she say: 'Viney, de debil has got holt er dat boy sho' 'nough, an' no mistake. I's afeard I has got plum to de end of de string wid him. Seems to me dat maybe hit's a jedgment on me 'count er de name I give him—'cause he ain't no mo' lak de other chillen den ef he wa'n't no kin to 'em.

" 'Lindy,' say I, 'you has tried de Scriptures an' you has tried spoilin' sev'al rods on dat boy, an' hit's time to try somethin' else. Ef you has de idea dat de name you give him got him stahted off wrong why don't you give him a new one?'

"Lindy ran out in de yahd, got Cornell an' drug him on up to de Buffo'ds'es an' tol' 'em de whole thing fum staht to finish.

" 'Now,' say de majah when hit was all tol', 'I gathers dat what you wants to do is to name dis boy ovah, so as to give him a new staht—an' you wants de name to be outen de Bible.' 'Yes, suh,' say Lindy; 'I wants hit to be a Bible name dis time.' Fo' a minute Majah Buffo'd look lak he was searchin' roun' in his haid to think er somethin'. Den he say: 'Call him Beelzebub!' 'Is hit a sho'nuff Bible name?' ask Lindy. 'Dat's what hit am,' say de majah. 'Den dat's what he'll be named,' say Lindy, 'an' we'll call him Bub fo' short.'

"An dat's how come de rechristenin' of Cornell."

Rockbottom and Miss Sally Baker.

“De othah night, while I wuz waitin’ on de table,” said Viney, “Cunnel Slocum wuz talkin’ ’bout a p’fessor fum ovah de sea whut come heah to mek a book ’bout de Newnited States. He wuz visitin’ to fin’ out how much wusser we am dan de folks whar he come fum; an’ ’cordin’ to whut he seed an’ observated heah, he say dat dis country am fixin’ fo’ to blow up an’ bust befo’ many yeahs am out—jes’ lak his town did oncet.”

Uncle Peter hitched nearer.

“Whar’d he come fum?” he inquired interestedly.

“Cunnel Slocum say he come fum Rome.”

“Rome—Rome!” repeated Uncle Peter. “Why Rome ain’t ’crosst de sea! Rome’s a piece down de rai’road fum heah. I knows, fo’ Ise been to Rome mahse’f.”

“Co’s’e, Uncle Petah,” said Viney scornfully, “you cain’t be spected to know ev’ything. De Rome whut dis heah p’fessor come fum wuz name’ after Rome, Georgy.”

Uncle Peter was silenced.

“Anyhow,” continued Viney, “when I lef’ de Slocums’s dat night de combersation got to goin’ roun’ in my min’; an’ seem’ to me ef dis heah country do blow up an’ bust, hit’s gwine to be ’cause folks has so much did fo’ ’em now’days dat dey’s got too much time to think ’bout deyselves. Co’s’e folks lak you an’ me, Uncle Petah, don’ come under de haid Ise speakin’ of. We’s got to keep scratchin’ ef we wants to keep meat on ouah bones, let alone in de pot. I has in min’ de well-off white folks, whut don’ no mo’ have to worry ’bout whar dey livin’s comin’ fum dan you an’ me worry ’bout drawin’ ouah nex’ breff.

“Dem’s de folks whut stops to listen whut am goin’ on in dey min’ ev’y minute.

“Dis heah life’s a cur’ous thing! De good Lawd knowed whut He was doin’ when He give Adam his walkin’ papers outen de Gyarden of Edom. Hadn’t dat

happen when hit did, ev'y snake in de place would 'a' tuck up de job o' strippin' apple trees to he'p him an' Eve pass de time. So when Adam tuk his belongin's an' got to wuk, hit twuz a blessin' to him. He could set back in his cheer of a evenin', while Eve done de darnin' an' think 'bout dem days, lak all o' us does; but down in his haht he knowed de Gyarden wouldn' 'a' done as a reg'lar job!

"De way things is in dis worl' 'minds me of a man whut's walkin' on de aidge er a steep place: Ef he feels his laigs gittin' wabbly he mustn't stop an' watch his knees trimble, an' holler: 'Lawd, have mussy on my po' no-'count soul!' Dat kin' er doin's ain't gwine to fetch him nowhahs 'cep'n' down in de ditch. Ef he spec's to git pas' de bad places on dat road an' reach whar he's boun' fo', he'll have to tek his eyes offen himse'f an' fix 'em on de evahlastin' hills 'way off yondah.

"Hit use' to be dat de white ladies in dis town could raise dey famblies an' run big houses an' plan'ations too—some of 'em; an' when I says run 'em an' raise 'em, hit meant fum de groun' up.

"Tek Mis' Fanny, fo' ninstance. Hadn't de wah come erlong an' spilt mos' er her pappy's money, an' some er his blood, she'd 'a' been mistis er one er de bigges' plan'ations in dese pahts. An' she wuz bein' brung up so dey wa'n't nothin' in de housekeepin' line whut she couldn't tu'n in an' do, ef she'd 'a' wanted to.

"Hit wa'n't no disgrace fo' her to mek her own dresses, or come down in de kitchen an' bake a batch er bread, or put up p'serbs. In dem days a lady jes' nachully learnt how to do dem things.

"Now tek de presen' gingeration an' look at de diff'unce! How many of 'em mek dey own clothes or know how to sew a stitch? Dey goes an' gits dey dresses made by a modest—or whutever Mis' Fanny calls hit—though de goodness knows dat de way ladies dresses looks now'days, dey ain't no sense in dat name. Dey don' have to stay home an' look aftah de cookin', 'cause dey puts de food in one o' dese heah fatherless cookers I heern 'bout. Dey buys soup put up in cubebs—er

whutevah hit's called. Dey houses am cleaned by a whack-'em cleaner whut sucks de dus' all up in a bunch. 'Stid er gittin' de reg'lar kin' er man to ten' to de yahd, dey gits a land-escape gahdner. Dey has dey fren's by 'lectricity, so's dey kin hang up de telephome when dey gits tiahed of 'em. An' dat's de way hit goes. Folks is gittin' smahter an' smahter; but, Uncle Petah, I'll tell yo' whut—dey ain't no happier!

"S'posin' sumpin come erlong lak de Flood an' swep' all dese newfangled doin's off de yearth, an' people wuz lef' lak dey stahted aftah de Ark run aground—jes' nothin' to git erlong wid 'cep'n' dey han's an' de sweat o' dey brows! Pretty soon aftah de fus' confusement had pass' away de men'd begin to cut down trees an' mek a clearin' fo' plantin'; de women'd begin mekin' a fiah fo' to cook some vittles 'gin de hawn blow fo' twleve 'clock; an' de chillen'd be splittin' up kin'lin' wood an' totin' watah—an' ev'ybody'd be singin' while dey went 'bout dey wuk. No room fo' nuvvus prosperation in dem days. Dey wa'n't nothin' dat pa'goric or calomel couldn' cure.

"Now'days hit's diff'unt. Looks lak mos' ev'y white lady I wuks fo' am got de nuvvus prosperation, or done been had hit—or am on de way to gittin' hit. An' de cur'ous thing 'bout hit am dat no sooner do dey git a li'l' way 'long in de disease dan heah come a trip to New Yahk or 'crost de sea.

"Heah's Mistah Bob Poindextah's wife li'ble to be tuk down wid hit any minute. Heah's Mis' Fanny's ma'ied daughter jes' gittin' ovah hit. Heah's Mistah Frank Buffo'ds's wife gone to a cemetary to git huh health back, 'cause she's plum wo' out fum too much ease. Heah's Cap'n Little's wife takin' de res' cure up in de mountains, though whut she's restin' fum de Lawd only knows! I hearn huh sister tellin' Mis' Fanny whut-all she have to do in de place whar she wuz at; an' fum whut I could mek out hit wuz de busiest way er restin' I ever hearn tell of! She have to git up at six in de mawnin' an' tek a walk; den she come back an' have a hot an' col' baff; den a woman come an' rub messages

on to huh spine; den dey 'lows her to eat an' res' a spell; den she gits up an' teks some sort er breathin' extra-sizes an' another walk—an' dat's de way hit goes twel time to crawl in bed!

"Dey's on'y one thing dat's gwine to bring 'em all to dey senses, an' hit's de thing whut happen' to Mis' Sally Baker."

"Whut am dat?" questioned Uncle Peter.

"Rockbottom!" said Viney sententiously. "Rockbottom! Hit'd be de savin' o' de quality an' de bustin' up o' mo' cemetariums dan you could shake a stick at!" She cleared her throat.

"Mistah Tom Baker wuz whut you call land-po'. When Gen'l Baker died he lef' a track o' lan' to Mistah Tom whut wuz 'crost de rivah, an' run fum de rivah aidege clean 'way to nowhahs—hit twuz so big. De ol' Gen'l helt on to hit twel his las breff; an' folks use to joke 'bout de Baker prop'ty, 'cause dey thought hit wa'n't much mo'n a breedin' ground fo' snakes an' sich. Hit twuz fo' yeahs aftah de ol' gen'man died dat a cousin er Mistah Tom's fum somewhahs or othah was pokin' roun' on de lan' rabbit huntin', an' 'skivered hit wuz full o' coal. An' a yeah later a comp'ny bought de track—all 'cep'n' a ol' fahmhouse an' a piece roun' hit—fo' such a passel er money, Uncle Peter, dat I cain't even trus' to mw recomem'ry to call de 'mount.

"Up twel den Mistah Tom hadn' been even middlin' well-to-do; but ez soon ez he sold dat prop'ty de fambly commence' lettin' out de tucks*in dey way er livin'—an' lettin' 'em out so fas' you could almos' hyah de stitches breakin'!

"De fus' thing dey did wuz to sen' fo' a arkteck fum New Yawk ——"

"A whut?" queried Uncle Peter.

"A arkteck! De fus' man whut built wuz Noah, Uncle Petah. An' he had to tek an' buil' de Ark. So dey's been callin' de men whut buil's houses arktecks evah sence. Well, de Bakers dey put up de fines' house whut dey could git put up. An' when twuz finish' dey wa'n't nothin' good nuff roun' heah to go in hit. Dey

had to go traipsin' 'way off yondah somewhahs fo' de funnisher an' cyarpets an' sich. Den dey wuz one room in de place whut wuz give ovah to nothin' but paintin's ——"

"How come dey didn' paint de othahs ef dey wuz so rich?" put in Uncle Peter.

"Laws a mussy, Uncle Peter, hit's pitchah-paintin's I means, an' not paint outen a paint pot! Dese heah wuz paintin's dat Miss Sally Baker brung home fum huh travels, an' cos' a whole mint er money. Lindy Jackson say dat she hearn dey wuz done by somebody's ol' marster, an' dat wuz whut mek 'em so 'sensive. Seem lak to me ef I wuz so dead sot on havin' a paintin' ez dey wuz, I'd git one dat wuz done by a young marster whut had some stren'th to do de wuk plain—fo' mos' of 'em look sorter dingy to me. I wuz in de house one day while de fambly wuz off visitin'—de housemaid tuck me through. 'Heah's de one whut cos' de bigges' sight er money,' she says; an' she tuck me up in front er a paintin' dat wa'n't nothin' but de sun risin'!

"'Seem' lak to me,' says I, dat ef Mis' Sally'd git up of a mawnin' to see de sho-nuff sunrise, when a sof' breeze am blowin', an' de birds twitterin', an' de dew am on de grass, she'd fin' out sumpin' what'd beat dis pitchah all hollow—an' not have to pay no money out fo' hit besides.' 'Tween you an' me, Uncle Peter, paintin's lak dat ain't fo' no one but imbalids, whut cain't go out an' see de real thing; er fo' a man whut's been put in de calaboose fo' life. Folks whut has two laigs to ca'y 'em out an' roun' ain't got no need fo' sich pitchahs.

"Well, ez I wuz tellin' you, de place wuz too gran' fo' wu'ds; an' ef dar wuz anything whut you wanted, an' didn' happen to see, you could git hit by jabbin' a col-lahbutton stuck hind end fo'most in de wall. Jab one er 'em an' de lights go on! Hit anodder an' heah come one er de maids to fin' out whut you call fo', so's she could bring hit right off! You'd figgah dat, ef evah folks had de chancet to be happy, Mis' Sally Baker'd be in de front row er dat crowd! All she had to do wuz jes' to set roun' an' enjoy dat house. De chillen wa'n't no

care on huh, fo' dey had a guv'ness. De house didn' bothah huh, fo' she had a housekeepah to run hit, an' I don' ric'lect how many se'vants; an' Mistah Tom didn' bothah huh, fo' he was tuck up mos er de time wid business or hosses.

"Mis' Sally commence' givin' a heap er en'tainments, an' havin' house pahties, an' runnin' ovah to Nashville to go to de pahties er de othah folks what wuz lak huhse'f; an' bimeby she got tiahed er dat an' commence' to run up to New Yawk to see 'bout dis, dat an' de othah. Den she tuck a notion to git de paperin' er de house done over ag'in, 'cause de colors didn't suit huh—traipsin' roun' heah an' there, twel hit look lak she wuz bit thoo an' thoo by de bug er unres'fulness. Den all of a suddent Mis' Sally wuz tuck down sick, an' de doctah p'nounce de ailment nuvvus prosperation. You see, Uncle Petah, 'stid er tekin' dem dollahs an' trainin' de wings on 'em to fly whar dey'd be a blessin' to de folks whut need 'em mos', she had tu'n' de eagles' haids to'd huh haht; an' hit wuz gittin' dat scrouged up wid money an' selfishness dat she commence' to have a ingrowin' soul, which am a hun'erd times wusser'n a ingrowin' nail. Mis' Sally wuz de mis'rables', mos res'less pusson whutevah you wants to see an' heah! She wuz traipsin' off fus' to one place an' den to anothah, not knowin' edzackly whut ailed huh—even ef de doctahs did say hit wuz huh ne'ves; an' ev'y time she'd meet up wid some one whut wuz in de same boat ez she wuz, den hit'd be to try de same cure dey wuz tryin'.

"Things went on dataway fo' three yeahs, when all of a suddent hit spread ovah de town lak fiah dat Mistah Tom Baker had done been an' los' ev'y cent he owned in spec'latin', an' de onlies' thing lef' wuz de ol' fahm-house 'crost de rivah.

"Dey sent Mis' Sally a telegraph to come home; an' I reckon hit wuz hahder fo' 'em to break de news to huh dan it had been fo' Mistah Tom to lose de money. Folks wuz expectin' to heah dat she'd jes' drapped ovah in hu'n tracks at de tur'ble news, an' dat hit would nachully be de en' er Mis' Sally. Well, ez de case happen sometimes

mos' usually, folks wuz wrong. Ef dey's any quality in white folks, happenin's lak dat am de ones whut bring hit out—jes lak de wah did; an' hit twuz time fo' Mis' Sally to show whut kin' er folks she come fum.

“De gran' house an' all de funnishings wuz sold fo' debt. An' Mistah Tom Baker an' his fambly scraped whut dey could together an' tuck de road 'crost de rivah to de fahmhouse. Fum de time Mis' Sally step off de train not one soun' did any one hyah huh say 'bout nuv-vus prosperation, or how she wuz feelin'. She had a li'l' money wid huh, an' ez de fahm was got mighty run-down dey used hit fo' replenishin' de tools an' sich ez well ez dey could. Dar wuz a li'l' cabin near de place, jes' 'bout big nuff fo' a small fambly; an' ez de Slo-cums's wuz in Nashville wid Miss May fo' de winter, an' not needin' us, Isom offered hisse'f to he'p Mistah Tom, who wuz pow'ful glad to git him. I had intentions er doin' all I could fo' Mis' Sally, 'cause I knowed dey couldn' begin to keep a se'vant; an' I tuck pleasure in doin' whut I could.

“Laws, Uncle Petah, you nevah saw such a mess of a place in yo' life ez dat fahm when we fus' got there! Hit tuck us a whole month befo' hit even begin to be fitten fo' people lak de Bakers to live in; an' ez Mis' Sally hadn' been rais' to do much 'bout de house alone—even befo' Mistah Tom got rich she wa'n't great on housewuk—you can 'magine de time we had an' whut-all we had to do! Thoo de whole time I was watchin' Mis' Sally, ez anxious ez a cat, fo' fear er dat nuvvus prosperation bustin' out on huh; but nary a sign.

“Inside of two months, Uncle Petah, whut wid all on us wukkin' lak bees, de place look fine an' p'sentable. I tuk an' learnt Mis' Sally how to mek bread, an' how to milk an' churn; an' even cut de chillen some dresses. An' hit suttently wuz s'prisin' de way she cotch on! Ef evah I had a sup'stition dat she wuz feelin' down in de mouf I'd git huh busy at some kin' er light wuk, an' tell huh stories 'bout endurin' de wah; an' bimeby I could feel in my haht dat hit had tuk de weight offen huh.

“Huh cheeks commence' to fill out an' git pink, lak

when she wuz a young lady, whut wid all de extrasize she wuz takin' an' keepin' huh min' busy wid learnin' things. When Mistah Tom'd come home fo' meals he'd say dat hit wuz wuth while pinchin' huh face, now dar was flesh to pick up in his fingers! De fr'en's whut drove out wuz dat 'stonished at de change in huh, an' at not findin' huh standin' wid one foot in de grave aftah huh hahdships, dat dey moufs drap open an' mighty nigh stayed dat way!

“‘Hit's de watah done hit,’ says one er de ladies aftah she tuck a drink ouden de spring near de house; ‘an' you's plum' foolish not to tu'n de fahm into a cemetary!’

“‘Mis' Sally wuz holdin li'l' Tom on huh lap jes' den, an' she looked ovah his haid 'crost to whar I wuz standin' an' laughed.

“‘Viney,' she says, lookin' happier'n evah she had looked when she owned de grand house an' fine stuff in hit, ‘am dat de thing whut cured de nuvvus prosperation?’

“‘Well'm,' says I, ‘hit wa'n't de spring water so much ez hit twuz whut de spring water rests on, Mis' Sally.’

“‘Whut am dat?’ says de visitor.

“‘Rockbottom!' says I; an' at dat ev'y one jine' in a laugh.”

The Unaccountable Sex.

“De female sect,” remarked Uncle Peter to Viney as they sat on the little cabin porch enjoying the sunshine of Indian summer, “am de curousest an’ mos’ un’countables’ folkses in de worl’.”

“Hit always amusifies me,” responded Viney dryly, “to heah dat remahk observated by de menfolkse, Uncle Peter. Dey ain’t nothin cur’ous ner un’countable in de female sect. Hit’s de male whut answers dat puhscription. When hit comes to doin’ whut’s to be did, a woman do hit er she don’ do hit—one er de odder. Dat’s all dey is ’bout hit. Hit’s lak playin’ a game er cyards wid a deck whut’s bavided in haif, an’ you jes’ nachully knows det if you ain’t got de ace er di’mon’s de odder pusson’s holdin’ hit.

“But, wid a man, you’s playin’ a game whah paht er de deck am on de table, an ef you ain’t got big casino you don’t know ef hit’s in his han’ er in de widdah. A man cain’t count on hisse’f, let alone ’spectin’ a woman to count on him. He jes’ nachully finds a stoppin’-off station between ’gwine to’ an’ ‘ain’t gwine to’ an’ he’s as liable to plant hisse’f in de middle er de seesaw ez he am on one end er de odder. Wid de male sect dey ain’t no tellin’ at all.

“Tek de case er de preachah an’ Ros’bel. Dat gal had done laid herse’f out fo’ to marry him goin’ on dese pas’ fo’ yeahs, an’ she wuz holdin’ on to huh intention fine twel sumpin come along whut give hit a consid’able jar. Lindy Jackson’s niece, Mirella, had come to town one Sunday on a execution train fum Mar’etta, Georgy, an’ she changed huh min’ ’bout goin’ back dat night, ’count er Beelzebub’s goat—Beelzebub am Lindy’s boy. De way it happen Mirella wuz standin’ on one side er de fence tryin’ to coax de goat to come on up to huh, when one er dese heah no-count li’l windpuffs come erlong an’ whipped huh execution ticket clean outen huh jacket pocket right thoo de fence under de goat’ses ve’y nose. By de time Mirella had clum de fence, hit twuz too late.

De goat wuz jes' standin' dere lookin' ez peac'ble ez ef all dem miles fum heah to Mar'etta didn' mek no mo' diff'ence on de inside of him dan dey did on de out. So hit twuz owin' to dat windpuff or de goat— whichevah way you wants to look at hit— dat Mirella met de preachah, fo' she had to p'olong huh visit an' mek nuff money fo' rai'road fare.

“Lindy got huh a temp'rary place ez chambermaid up at Gen'l Poindextah's an', ez de preachah had cha'ge er de lawnmowin' at de Gen'l's, dat wuz de commencement er de beginnin' wid him an' Mirella. An po' Ros'bel wuz clean fo'got.

“Hit twuz tek Mirella to church an' de straw be'y festibles, an' go walkin' wid Mirella, an' settin' an' go walkin' wid Mirella, an' settin' on Lindy's po'ch steps o' a evenin' wid Mirella, twel hit looked plum ridic'lous. Whut in de worl' he evah seed in huh is mo'n I kin tell fo' she wuz mos'ly clothes. I don' believe de whole gal weighed ninety pounds. An' she hadn' no mo' sense'n a cricket. Always put me in mind er a mess o' greens whut seem lak sumpin when you puts hit on de fiah in de pot, but jes' nachully boils down to no mo'n a han'ful. I reckon ef Mirella had 'a' been boiled down de onliest thing whut would 'a' been lef' in de kittle would 'a' been de gol' toof dat niggah had in de front er huh mouf, fo' she didn' 'mount to a row er pins, no way you tuck huh. An' ez fo' standin' up 'longside er Ros'bel when hit comes to washin' er cookin' er bein' able to shout when she come thoo at revival services, why, Uncle Peter, Mirella'd have to tek de hi'most seat in de room.

“But fo' all dat she had de preachah goin', an'.when Ros'bel 'd come ovah in de aft'noons to he'p me wid de i'nin' I could tell hit twuz on huh min' pow'ful bad. She tuck hit out mos'ly comin' down on de boa'd—kabang!—wid a hot i'n, but I ain't said nothin', cause I knowed she'd have to wuk hit off someway.

‘Hit's de gol' toof whut has cotched him,’ says I one day jes' aftah she had slambanged de i'n down on one er Mis' Fanny Slocum'ses pillowshams; ‘an' ef I was rich, Ros'bel, I'd sen' you on down to a den'ist man an' pay fo' a moufful er de gol' ones fo' you—five up an' five down.

I sholy would.' I has wondered many a time sence den whut would 'a' happened ef I had helt my mouf shet 'stid er sayin' dem ve'y words, fo' I cain't tell yit ef hit twuz fo' de bes' er de wusst. But whutevah come in my haid aftahwahds 'bout hit don' mek no diff'ence, an' dey ain't no use tryin' to pick up spilt milk.

"Ros'bel didn't seem to want to say much mo' dat aft'noon. She 'peared to be thinkin' 'bout sumpin pow-ful hahd, an she lef' kinder soon. I nevah sot eyes on huh fo' three er fo' days when one aft'noon while I wuz sprinklin' down some clothes I heerd Ros'bel's footsteps on de po'ch an' she come on in. I didn' tu'n roun' right off ez I wuz jes' finishin' a dress.

"'Howdy, Ros'bel,' says I, though I ain't hearn huh call out lak she mos' usually do when she come on thoo to de back er de house. 'Sence when is you got so hightoned dat you cain't pass de time er day?' I rolled de dress up when I said dat, den I tu'n roun' an'—'Lawd have mussy on my soul!' I says. Hit 'twuz Ros'bel I wuz lookin' at an' yet hit wa'n't Ros'bel.

"'Ros'bel,' I says in a minute er two, aftah I had done got my breff a little, 'tek dat mask'rade offen yo' face.' I wuz mad, bein' skeered lak dat. She sorter say sumpin, I ain't un'erstan'. 'Stop dat tryin' to talk fool talk, Ros'bel,' says I, 'an' tek off dat falseface.' An' den all o' a suddent hit come ovah me dat hit wa'n't no false-face at all. Dat gal's gums an' huh lips wuz swoll up so, dat 'stid er huh mouf lookin' lak hit twuz paht er huh face, huh face look lak hit wuz de outside aidges er huh mouf. 'You's been an' got pizen oak on you!' I hollered. Ros'bel shuck huh haid an' open up huh mouf fo' to say sumpin. Dey wa'n't nary a front toof in dat niggah's haid!

"Uncle Peter, hit'd tek too long to tell you how I come at de whole story, fo' let alone dat she wuz back-wahd an' 'shamed to tell me, hit wuz all I could do to mek out whut she wuz sayin'.

"She had tuck huhse'f down to a den'ist man an' give him ten dollahs down an' promise mo' on de 'stallment plan ef he'd pull out huh front teef an' mek huh a set er gol' ones instid, whut she could put away when

she wuz wukkin'. He tol' huh dat aftah de swellin' an' so'ness would go 'way he'd put in de teef. An' heah de swellin' wuz gittin' wusser an' wusser an' Ros'bel scared plum outen huh wits 'cause de hurtin' wuz turrible. She had figgahed dat ef Mirella's one gol' toof fotched de preachah, ten o' her'n would git him back strong; but she discalculated on de desult. An' heah she wuz settin' in my kitchen rockin' back an' fo'th, an' all I knowed wuz to poultice huh mouf twel I could go on down to de den'ist man an' ax him whut to do.

"I went straight to de numbah Ros'bel gimme, an' de place wuz all closed up. De gen'l'man whut had de awfice nex' do' say hit had done been close dataway fo' de las' two days an' he reckoned de den'ist had gone somewhahs. 'So dat's de end er Ros'bel's money,' says I to myse'f; an' ez I had to pass Mis' Fanny's house on de way home, I stopped in fo' to tell huh 'bout hit an' ax whut to do. She tol' me to bring Ros'bel on up to de house an' she'd have a reg'lar den'ist look at huh face; so wid dat I hurry on home.

"I wuz walkin' ez fas' ez I could when I heahs some one call out back er me: 'Hol' on, Sistah Hen'erson, whah is you boun' fo' so fas' dis fine aft'noon?' An' heah come dat preachah sailin' aftah me. He wuz all duded up an' grinnin' lak a chessy cat, an' when I 'membered all de mis'ry he had brung on Ros'bel an' all de teef an' night's res' she had los', not to say nothin' o' dat ten dollahs, I 'spon's to him ez col' ez ice: 'Aft'noon, Brothah Johnson.' He stepped up 'longside er me. 'You hasn't no bejections to my comp'ny—has you, Sistah Hen'erson?—'cause I is boun' on yo' d'rection.' 'No,' says I ez stiff ez a pokah; 'I ain't got no bejections,' fo' I seed my chancet.

"Hit wa'n't but a minute 'fo' hit came. 'I ain't seed Sistah Ros'bel dese heah las' few days,' says he, sweet ez sugar. 'Brothah Johnson,' says I, lookin' him hahd in de face, 'fo' a 'sponsible lawnmowah an' a man er de Gospel, hit suttently do pass my time how you kin ack lies.' He drew hisse'f up at dat. 'I don't un'stan' whut you's tryin' to insingerate,' says he. 'Don't you go hand-in' me no Bible words, Brothah Johnson,' says I, 'fo' hit

ain't goin' to git you nowhahs wid me aftah whut you's gone an' done.'

"He drawed back lak I wuz gwine to come at him wid a lick. 'Heah you is axin' 'bout dat po' lamb aftah de way you's treated huh! Puttin' on a in'cent face when you's lef' Ros'bel to run aftah dat puny li'l' string Mirella whut ain't wuth shucks outside er de price she paid fo' dat gol' toof er her'n!"

"Mos' usually de preachah 'spon's to talk wid a tex' fotched up outen de Bible, but dis time I had him an' his tex'es backed up in a cornder an' all he could do wuz jes' to look sheepish. 'An' now,' says I, 'when Ros'bel's done gone an' got huh looks sp'iled an' huh face all messed up 'count er you ——' At dat he broke in: 'Huh face! 'Count er me!' An' I tol' him de whole business 'bout dem gol' teef. Laws! You ought 'a' seed de preachah. He looked lak you could 'a' knocked him down wid a feathah an' I could see hit hit him sorter hahd.

"'Sistah Hen'erson,' he say presen'ly, 'dese pas' fo' yeahs I has had intentions er ma'yin' dat gal, on'y I jes' hadn' come to 'em yit; but now de Lawd has showed me my mistake an' I's agwine to ax huh to ma'y me dis ve'y aft'noon. Whah is she?"

"'She's down at my house, Brothah Johnson,' says I, 'an' you kin come 'long ef you wants to, but ef I knows enything 'bout menfolkses you ain't gwine to want huh when you sees huh face. You ain't agwine to think 'bout de qualities she's got—you's jes' nachully gwine to tu'n an' run.'

"'Sistah Hen'erson,' he says, awful earnes' lak, 'tek me on down to yo' house wid you,' an' sho nuff, Uncle Peter, he come. We wälked on in de house an' thoo to de kitchen whah Ros'bel wuz settin' waitin' fo' me. She caught sight er de preachah befo' he seed huh, an' quick ez a flash she grab a pillowslip offen a cheer an' drawed hit ovah huh haid. An' dar she set when we come in, jes' lak one er dese heah Kukluxes. 'Ros'bel,' says I, marchin' up in front er huh, 'de preachah has come heah to ax you to ma'y him.' Hit wuz sorter suddent lak to come at de po' gal dataway, but I b'lieves ef you's got to do sumpin whut ain't 'greeable de sooner hit's ovah de

better. 'You says you wants to ma'y huh no matter whut she look lak?' says I to de preachah. He come on ovah an' tuck Ros'bel's han'. 'Dat I do,' says de preachah. 'Den,' says I to Ros'bel, 'tek dat pillow slip offen yo' haid an' look Brothah Johnson square in de face.'

"Ros'bel done ez I tol' huh. Uncle Peter, I had seed huh a'ready, but when she come out er dat slip hit wuz mos' ez bad ez de fus' time I had looked at huh. 'Heah is whah de preachah lose his backbone,' went thoo my min'. I give one look at him. Dere he stood lookin' in huh eyes lak ez ef he wuz gazin' at de Queen er Sheby an' holdin' huh han' lak hit 'twuz made er di'mon's.

"'Ros'bel,' he says sof' lak, in de kin' er voice he uses when he prays low in de chu'ch, 'will yo' have me?'

"An' Ros'bel, not bein' able to speak un'erstandably, looked up at him an shuck huh haid—'Yes.'

Viney At The Moving Pictures.

"Mis' Fanny ain't been feelin' so well of late," said Viney to Uncle Peter as the latter helped her tie up the sweet-pea vines in front of the cabin.

"Shore 'nough?" Uncle Peter painfully straightened up from the stick over which he bent and turned an inquiring gaze on his informant.

"Yes," responded Viney. "She's been sorter peakid de las' few weeks; an' when I ax huh what is de matter she say hit's some 'monia. I doesn't know de destination er dat word edzeckly, but, 'cordin' to Mis' Fanny's pescription of hit, hit's some sort er stuff what p'vents a pusson fum sleepin'; an' what wid dat an' de chillen dancin' on huh haid all day, an' she too easy wid 'em to give 'em a tas'e er hick'ry tea, she's jes' plum' wo' to a frazzle."

"Chillen!" said Uncle Peter, with a puzzled look. "Whose chillen is you talkin' 'bout?"

"Mis' May's an' Mistah Robert's chillen. You see, whenever dey goes off to de springs in de summer dey leaves de two ol'est chillen wid dey gran-ma an' gran'pa, but dey sorter 'pen's on me lookin' after 'em too, specially now dat Mis' Fanny is feelin' po'ly; an', even ef she was well, I'd help, 'cause I knows how ag'avatin' chillen can be when dey's done been spoilt plum' rotten by dey kinfolks. I always believes what de Good Book say: 'Cas' yo' chickens on de water an' after many days dey will come home to roos'.' An' de Cunnel an' Mis' Fanny is jes' reapin' what dey cas' on de water, 'cause dey has done been an' spoiled dem chillen wuss'n dey own pa'ents has.

"Ev'y aft'noon I goes ovah to de house an' takes 'em out walkin' somewheres. Dat gives Mis' Fanny time to take a nap an' make herse'f 'resentable fo' de evenin', 'cause she always dudes up befo' Cunnel Slo-cum comes home.

"De other day I got up to de house a li'l' earlier'n

usual; an' when I come on thoo de dinin' room in de front hall fo' to tote de chillen upstairs an' dress 'em, Mistah Frank Slocum, de Cunnel's nephew, was jes git-tin' ready to leave de house. Bofe er de chillen was hangin' on to his coattails an' cuttin' up an hollerin' lak dey was plum' crazy. He had drapped in fo' lunch, an' nothin' wouldn't do dem young uns but fo' him to take 'em down town wid him.

"'Heigho, Viney!' he hollers, so soon as his eye lights on me—I always did lak Mistah Frank, 'cause he's so full er devilment—'cain't you git dese heah young Injuns offen me? Dey's wuss'n a couple er cockleburs!' An' he shuck hisse'f to git aloost fum 'em. At dat de chillen holler all de mo'. Hit was all dat I could do to pull 'em off. 'Now,' say Mistah Frank, 'I ain't got no time to fool roun' wid you young uns; but I'll tell you what I'll do: Ise gwine to give Viney some tickets'—an' he pulled out a roll er pink uns fum his hin' pocket, to' off three an' give 'em to me—'an' she'll take you-all to a show dis aft'noon.'

"At dat li'l Robert commence' prancin' an' shout-in': 'A circus! A circus! We's gwine to a circus!'

"'No,' say Mistah Frank; 'hit ain't no circus—hit's a movin' pitcher show.'

"'Movin'-pitcher show!' say I. 'Where does dey move de pitchers fum an' why does dey move 'em.'

"'I ain't got no time to 'splain to you now, Viney,' spon' Mistah Frank, smilin'. 'You jes' take de chillen to de cornder er Market an' Sevent' Streets an' you'll see de place, what's got music playin' on de outside.' I knowed whar he meant, 'cause hit was a new place jes' started, an' when Ise passin' I has stopped to listen to de music.

"'Dey don't 'low no cullud folks in dat place, do dey?' say I.

"'Not in gin'l,' say Mistah Frank; 'but Ise a half owner, an' ef de boy what takes in tickets say anythin' to you jes' give him dis.' An' Mistah Frank tuck a piece er paper outen a li'l book an' writ sumpin' on hit. 'Heah you is, an' goodby to you-all.' An' liftin' up Rob-

ert an' Mary to kiss 'em, he lit out fo' de gate as hard as he could tear.

"I went on upstairs wid de chillen an' wash an' dress 'em. I has seed chillen what have mo' stricter raisin', but I ain't never sot eyes on none what showed dey was quality mo' dan dem two chillen do. Dey knows dey is fine-lookin', an' when we went down de street dey was holdin' up dey haid an' steppin' lak a pair er circus hosses on p'rade day.

"When we come to de place we was aimin' fo' I tuck de two chillen by de han' an' march right on up to de boy what was takin' up de tickets. I handed out de three what Mistah Frank gimme. 'Heah!' he say, shovin' 'em back at me. 'We don't 'low no coons in heah!'

"At dat I stiffen up straight as a poka. 'Yo' po' white trash!' say I. 'I'm heah wid Mis' Fanny's gran'-chillen, an' we's come to see de show.' 'I don't care ef dey's Mis' Fanny's er Mis' Annie's er Queen Victory's gran'-chillen,' say dat smaht Aleck. 'Ise got orders not to remit no niggers, an' I ain't gwine t.!' By dat time a crowd commence to scrowdge up roun' to listen. 'Heah,' say I, th'owin' de piece er paper what Mistah Frank gimme right at de boy, 'I reckon when you sees dat you'll stop shootin' off dat big lip er your'n!' De boy look at de paper an' den at me. An' den he say, mighty sheepish-like, after a minute; 'All right, Aunty; I guess you can go in.' 'Don't yo' Aunty me!' say I; 'fo' Ise mighty p'tic'ler what kin' er folks I 'lows to claim kin wid me.' An', wid de people jes' hollerin' an' laughin', we went on in.

"Dark! I couldn't see my han' befo' me; an' de two chillen hung on to me lak snappin' turtles, dey was so 'fraid er losin' me.

"'Right down dis way,' say some one, an' I kep' on walkin'. 'Hm!' say I to myse'f. 'What do dey kick up all dese bejections 'gainst cullud folks comin' in heah?—'cause der ain't no way er tellin' de white fum de black after youse oncet inside!' We kep' on feelin' ouah way 'long, an' mus' agone clean on up to de p'served

seats, I reckon, when de voice say: 'Three seats right in heah!' An' we stop.

"I reach out an' grabbed holt of a man's haid by mistake. Den, befo' I could make any excusements, I sot right down on a lady's lap; an' fo' a minute dey was such a mixtry, what wid me an' de chillen tryin' to fin' ouah seats, an' dem people grumblin' at me an' sayin' all kin's er unpolite language, dat I was wishin' I nevah had come.

"By-an'-by we got all straight an' I look roun' fo' to spy de movin' pitchers; but dere was sumpin' goin' on up in front what extracted my 'tention an' I fo'got all 'bout de movin' pitchers an' looked at de place where de light was comin' fum an' folks was walkin' roun' in a room. Leas'ways dey look lak folks; yet dere was sumpin' curi's 'bout 'em what mek hit seem lak dey wa'n't folks.

"'Whar's de movin' pitchers, Viney?' say Mary, snuggin' up to me. 'Sh-h-h!' say I. 'I don't know zackly jes' yet; but be still er we cain't hear 'em when dey do come.'

"Den I look at dem folks up to'd de front ag'in, an' try to mek out what dey was doin'. Hit was a ol' man an' woman, an' a young man—dey son, I reckon—all in a room togedder; an' hit look lak de son was beggin' de ol' man fo' sumpin' er othah; but he scowl an' shuck his haid an' mek a face lak a thundercloud. His lips was movin' but dere wa'n't a mossel er soun' come fum 'em. Dat was de curi's part. Den de son turn to his mammy—she look lak a feelin'-hearted ol' lady—an' ax huh to ax de ol' man for whatever hit was he was after. De ol' lady look at de ol' man sorter pleadin'-lak an' say sumpin' to him; but he look madder'n ever. Den de boy an' his ma see hit 'tain't no use, an' dey goes on out er de room. At dat de ol' man sets down at his desk an' stahts to look ovah some papers what he gits outen a drawer. But firs' he looks to see dat dere ain't no one roun'. By-an'-by de do' opens slow an' de son slips in de room, tiptoes ovah behin' de ol' man, an'—kabam!—down he comes right on de ol' man's haid wid his fis'; an' de ol' man drops

ovah in de cheer widout makin' anudder move. De son grab de box er papers an' run out de room.

"At dat de whole place change befo' you could blink yo' eyelid, an' ef heah wa'n't a railroad track an' de room was gone as clean as ef hit nevah had been in dat place. Befo' I could study out how dey got de place all fix up so quick, heah come a man runnin' fast as a deer, an' way off yonder heah come a train—a shore-nough train, Uncle Petah—true as yo' bawn! You could see de smoke an' heah dat injine a-comin'—puff! puff! puff!—louder'n louder, an' closeter an' closeter. De chillen grab holt er me an' commence whimp'in'. Lawdy,' say I; 'lemme git out er heah! Ise got charge er dese chillen an' Ise a-gwine carry 'em back safe to Mis' Fanny ef hit's de las' thing I lives to do.' Nearer an' nearer come dat injine. I wa'n't waitin' to ax any excusements. I tuck bofe dem chillen up in my ahms an', wid one jump, I busted thoo dem seats an' de folks in 'em, an' run fo' de do'! We was all three hollerin' as loud as we could holler. I ain't no sooner'n got into de aisle dan de whole place riz up an' started fo' de do'. I reckon dey had jes' come to dey senses an' was tryin' to git out er dat injine's way too; but I didn't have no time fo' to stop an' ax 'em 'bout hit. 'Lemme out er heah!' say I, shoutin' at de top er my lungs. 'Dese heah is Mis' Fanny's gran'chillen, an' Ise got to git' em home!'

"Wid dat, I helt my haid down an' pushed thoo dat crowd wid hit, twel we knocked a openin' fo' to git out de do' an' on to de sidewalk. Heah come all de res', tumbelin' out after us, as skeered as we was; but dey all got out in time an' dere wa'n't no one hurt, tho' some was kinder mussed up.

"'What's all dis crowd an' noise 'bout?' say a man back er me; an' when I turn roun' dere stan's Mistah Frank. De chillen was still cryin' an' I was straightenin' 'em out; but when dey seen him dey bofe run up to him. 'Somebody hollered fire!' say a boy befo' I could answer Mistah Frank. 'Hit wa'n't no one hollerin' fire,' say I; 'hit was de chillen hollerin' "Viney!" dat dey must 'a' mistook fo' dat, Mistah Frank.'

“‘So,’ say Mistah Frank, lookin’ at Robert an’ Mary, ‘you is de cause er all dis excitement!’

“‘Hit was me!’ say I speakin’ up sorter mad; ‘cause I was dat outdid wid Mistah Frank fo’ lettin us go inside dat place. ‘Hit was me! When I seen dat injine comin’ smack dab at dese heah chillen I knowed dat wa’n’t no place fo’ us; an’ I lit out fo’ de do.’ At dat de crowd commence whoopin’ an’ laughin’ twel hit look lak dey nevah was gwine to stop, but I couldn’t see no joke! an’ de mo’ dey laugh de madder I got. Mistah Frank was chucklin’ ‘long wid de res’ of ‘em.

“‘Come on chillen,’ say I; ‘dis ain’t no place fo’ us!’ An’ we went on home. When I tol’ Mis’ Fanny ‘bout hit, she carry on lak dem other folks did; an’ den, when she finish laughin’, she tol’ me hit wa’n’t no shore-nough injine ner folks, but jes’ pitchers of ‘em. Den she try to splain a whole rigmaro’ to me ‘bout how hit was did; but I ain’t understood none of hit. Dat was a shore-nough injine! I seen de smoke an’ heard hit comin’ wid my own eyes an’ ears, as plain as I seen you tie up dem pea vines, Uncle Petah,” concluded Viney.

“White folks is pow’ful smaht—dey ain’t no denyin’ dat; an’ dey knows how to fix up mo’ curi’s things in a minute dan us niggahs could study out in a hun’red yeahs. But de nex’ time Ise axed to movin’ pitchers hit’ll be when Mis’ Fanny has housecleanin’ an’ gits me to take ‘em off de wall, ‘cause I ain’t got no tas’e fo’ de newfangled ones.”

Viney On Conservation.

"Up at Slocumses," said Viney to Uncle Peter, "ev-'ybody's busy doin' sumpin fo' de wah. De Cunnel am out sellin' lib'ty bombs; May's jined de Red Crost sewin' bee; Mistah Robe't am head of de Home P'serve Gyuhds; an' Mis' Fanny am pres'dent of de Food Convuhstation S'ciety."

"Food Convuhstation S'ciety?" Uncle Peter turned a puzzled gaze upon Viney. "Hit do seem funny dat you has to jine a s'ciety to have food convuhstation. Why, hit seem lak to me dat de onlies' kind er convuhstation I heahs dese days am 'bout food."

"Miss Fanny," responded Viney, "was splainin to me 'bout dis heer s'ciety; an' she say dat one er de things hit means am dat de mo' cawn bread we eats, de quicker de wah gwine to be winned."

Uncle Peter smacked his lips.

"Kin de men b'long to dat s'ciety?" he asked with heightened interest.

"Ev'ybody kin b'long," Viney told him. "De idea 'm fo' to sen' all de wheat 'crost de sea whut kin be spa'ed, an' fo' de folks ovah heah to use up de cawn."

"Maybe dem folks ovah yondah whar de fightin's gwine on ain't nevah tasted hoecake, ner cawn flip-flaps. 'Caze if dey had, dey'd want us to keep de wheat an' give 'em de cawn.

"I don' know nothin' 'bout dat part," Viney told him, "'cep'n' hit's one er de things whut goes 'long wid food convuhstation."

"Did Mis' Fanny git up dat s'ciety?" asked Uncle Peter.

"No; Mis' Fanny say hit was agonized by a gen'l'-man up in Wash'n'on. Dis heer Mister Whoever say dat, onless dis country cuts down on hits rashuns, hit ain't gwine to git thoo whoopin' de Ge'mans fo' a long time."

"How come we kin lick 'em sooner by goin' hongry?" Uncle Peter's expression was incredulous.

"Man!" exclaimed Viney. "You's 'nough to give a

pusson de ne'vous presperation! Ain't you done heerd nothin' 'tall 'bout de Newnited States sendin' hits superflupus p'ojuce to Englum an' Franch fo' to feed de sojers an' de folks ovah yondah? Ain't none er de white ladies been roun' to yo' house to splain?"

Uncle Peter shook his head.

"Ef dey has, Campsey ner de chillen ain't say nothin' to me 'bout hit."

"Dey done been to see me," Viney informed him, "an' dey talked to me 'bout savin' ev'y scrap er vittles an' not wastin' no food, an' ax me would I take de pledge to go widout meat one day in de week! Well, I tol' 'em I hadn't had a mossel er meat in de house fo' foah days nohow; but I thanked 'em fo' de compliment."

Viney paused thoughtfully.

"De onlies' thing I ain't got used to," she continued, "'bout dis heer food convuhsation am de way Mis' Fanny's tuck to nosin' roun' 'bout me takin' a li'l' snack home at night when I's done wukkin' at huh house. You knows, Uncle Petah, dat Mis' Fanny ain't neveh been picayunish wid vittles as long as we's been wukkin' fo' huh. Co'se I didn' always ax huh could I take de vittles home. Ef dey was a few slices o' ham lef' in de 'frig'-raider, er some aigs no one wuzn't usin', er a mite o' sugah I happen' to need fo' to make my quinch p'serbs, er a li'l' sumpin lak dat—why, I jes borried offen Mis' Fanny an' ain't said nothin' 'bout hit. De Slocumses wouldn' 'a' missed hit no mo' dan you er me'd miss a eyelash.

"Well, heer de yuther night I wuz gittin' ready to come on home, when Mis' Fanny walks out in de kitchen. I wasn't lookin' fo' huh, 'cause she ain't nevah been in de habit o' comin' back aftah meals. I had jes' put my cape on an' wuz gittin' ready to tie up de bun'l' er vittles. I had wropped up in paper. I stahsted to grab f' hit when Mis' Fanny walked in; but she seen hit befo' I could hide it undah my cape. Huh eyes jes' bo'ed thoo de wrappin'. Hit sort o' made me oneasy.

"'Honey,' I says, 'whut you doin' back in de kitchen dis time o' evenin', 'way fum de Cunnel? You knows he always lak to have you roun' him when he's home.' Mis'

Fanny ain't seem to heah me. 'Viney,' she say, sort o' sharp like—'taint often I heahs Mis' Fanny use dat tone —'whut has you got in dat bun'l'?' Well, she ax me so onexpected dat I tole de trufe. 'Hit's some supper, Mis' Fanny,' I says, 'dat I ain't had time to eat heer; so I'm totin' hit home.' An' I thought dat'd be de end of hit. But no. 'Open de bun'l',' says Mis' Fanny, 'I wants to see ef you 'lowed yo'se'f 'nough to eat.' Dey wuzn't nothin' else to do but open hit; so I done hit."

"I's plum' s'prised at Mis' Fanny!" Uncle Peter interjected. "Whut wuz in de bun'l'?"

"Dey wuzn't nothin' but half a chicken, an' a loaf o' bread Mis' Fanny didn't need, an' a pat o' butter, an' a couple o' po'k chops, an' three roastin' ears, an' de sweet taters whut was lef' fum suppah—an' a few odds an' en's lak dat."

Uncle Peter grunted.

"Whut de matter wid de white folks, anyhow, dat dey ain't lak dey use to be? Whut Mis' Fanny say?"

"Mis' Fanny was as mad as a ho'net," answered Viney in an aggrieved tone. "She tol' me hit 'twuzn't no use in huh j'inin' de Food Convuhstation S'ciety when dey wuz a leak goin' on in huh kitchen.

"'Mis' Fanny,' I says, 'dis ain't no leak! A leak's sumpin' whut's wasted—jes' plum' wasted. None er dese heer vittles is gwine to be wasted. No'm! Dey's gwine in a good cause. Why, Mis' Fanny,' I says, 'I ain't had no meat in de house sence Friday, when Henry Clay's houn' dog brung home a piece o' bacon he mus' 'a' lifted fum somewheres. De food now'days am so expensable dat me an' Isom cain't even keep de chillen's stummicks middlin' full. De white ladies whut come to call on me de yuther day tol' me how all de folks, white an' black, got to be mo' 'c'mical wid dey food fum now on. But, Mis' Fanny, dey didn' know dat de mos' of us black ones don't usually have 'nough fo' to be 'co'mical. So dat's why I'm carryin' dem vittles home, honey. 'Cause ef I's gwine to jine de Food Convuhstation S'ciety I's got to have 'nough food in de house fo' to have convuhstation wid!'"

Viney On Club Doings.

"Where was you yistiddy aft'noon?" asked Uncle Peter as he settled himself against his favorite post on Viney's little cabin porch. Viney was intent upon matching pieces of gayly colored gingham and calico together for a log cabin quilt. "Campsey sent me up heah wid a mess o' greens fo' you-all, an' wasn' no one roun' to leave 'em wid; so I toted 'em back home ag'in."

"You c'n tote 'em on back up heah, Uncle Petah," said Viney. "My th'cat's been fairly hollerin' fo' greens. I would 'a' been heah, on'y I was needed up at Miss Fanny Slocumses. I went up there to houseclean befo' de meetin' an' serve light 'freshments afterward."

"Miss Fanny ce'tainly am de meetin'est lady in dis town. Fus' hit was Suffidge; den hit was dis heah Social Circus wuk; den de Food Convuhstation. An' now whut nex'?"

"Dis heah was de meetin' of de Fense S'ciety. I couldn' heah whut hit was all 'bout, perzackly, 'cause I was fixin' de tea things over in de fur cornder of de liberty. But I tried to keep a ear peeled on de way dey runs deir meetin's, so's I could git some of hit in my haid an' mek de members of de Mothers of Africky set up an' take notice at de monthly meetin'. An' I picked up a few doin's heah an' dere fum de white ladies.

"Fus' you's got to rise an' 'dress de cheer fo' you spress whut you's aimin' to say. An' s'posin' one er de ladies wants to puppose sumpin' whut she thinks ought to be did, she gits up an' speaks huh min' out; an' den she sets down. Den' de pres'dent say; 'Ladies, hit have been moved dat we does so an' so. Is dere anyone sick o' de motion?' An' ef someone gits up an' say dey am, why den dey all takes a vote on hit; an' den de pres'dent say: 'De eyes has it.'

"Miss Fanny splained dem pahts to me afterward. Hit seem dat dem ladies runs de s'cieties by whut am called parlormeant rules. Dat am, ef you ain't got de right kind er congenuity wid some er de members, an'

you's settin' in de parlor holdin' de meetin', you's got to kiver up yo' feelin's wid manners. Once de meetin's broke up, an' de ladies leaves de house, dey lets de tuck outen de politeness.

"Uncle Peter, one er de main diffunces 'twixt de white folks an' de cullud, outside o' skin an' hair, am dat us darkies am mo' free wid showin' ouah inside feelin's den de white folks. You knows down at de Mothers of Africky meetin's we ain't nevah use no parlormeant rules; yet things comes out 'bout lak dey would ef we did have 'em. When de Mothers was fixin fo' to have a new treasurer after ol' Aunt Dicey Johnson borried all de money she had in de treasury fo' to have a chicken dinner, Lindy Jackson an' Ros'bel bofe tuck it in deir haid to go after dat office. Lindy beat Ros'bel to hit by goin' roun' on de sly an' tellin' de members dat Ros'bel had dat cov'tush a disposition she'd take a nickel offen a dead man's eye. Hit wa'n't so a-tall; but Lindy was boun' fo' to be treasurer an' wouldn't stop at nothin'.

"You 'members hearin' 'bout what a wool-pullin' match dere was de day Lindy got 'lected? Ros'bel said hit was a bunco game, an' she wa'n't gwine to be bunked by no one! Long as she didn' git 'lected, she say she was gwine to have de pleasure er takin' hit out of Lindy's hide right on de spot. An' she sho' did take her pleasure, twel de whole meetin' riz up in a bunch an' pulled her offen de new treasurer.

"Now ef hit was ary of de white ladies' s'cieties where someone was runnin' fo' pres'dent, fo' ninstance, an' spose dat Mis' Fanny beat Mis' Buffo'd to hit, do you reckon dem ladies would ondress deir tempahs? No, Uncle Petah; white folks am too mannerable fo' dat. Mis' Buffo'd she'd sail up to Mis' Fanny after de 'lection an' tell her how plum' tickled to pieces she am dat Mis' Fanny was 'lected; while on de inside she'd be so bilin' mad she'd mighty nigh swell up an' bust. An' lak ef hit was dat Mis' Fanny had got 'lected to be pres'dent er De Free Soup fo' de Poor S'ciety, Mis' Buffo'd ain't gwine to have no' rest twel she stahts a s'ciety called De Free Sandwich fo' de Poor 'Sociation, an' gits herse'f made pres'dent er dat. An' whenever she c'n double-

cross Mis' Fanny an' git her in bad, she's gwine to do hit.

"Hit's a heap mo' politer way dat de white ladies has dan de way Lindy an' Ros'bel'd do hit; but hit ain't so short an' reliev'in' to de feelin's. Lindy an' Ros'bel has hit out on de spot an' den goes on bein' de best er fr'en's. But wid dem two white ladies, one er dese heah reg'lar fam'ly fuse gits stahted, almos' lak dey has up mongst de mount'neers. Mis' Fanny gits so ag'vated at Mis' Buffo'd dat she gits up a party an' sends imitations to all de quality what fit endurin' de wah, 'cep'in' de Buffo'dses. Den Mis' Buffo'd egg de majah on to cut Cunnel Slocum daid on de street. Den de whole two families takes hit up, cl'ar on down to de secon' an' third gingerations, twel dey has stahted such a ruckus dere ain't hahdly no stoppin' hit.

"Dese heah club doin's puts me in mind er de time when one er de ladies in Mis' Fanny's set stahted de Confeddick Cim'tery Improvement S'ciety. Dat was befo' you an' Campsey come heah fum Marietta, Uncle Petah.

"Well, dat cim'tery ce'tainly did need some improvement. Hit had got so choked up an' run ovah wid wild grape an' honeysuckle vines an' weeds dat you'd jes' nachully have to dig ef you wanted to fin' de top er one er de graves. Whut tombstones you could see shinin' thoo de tangle er bresh was leanin' ev'y which-a-ways, 'count er bein' ondermined by de rains, an' no one to prop 'em up ag'in. In de middle er de graveyahd, mongst de sycamo's, was a li'l ramshackle cabin whut had been built fo' de fus' section what tended to de place; an' when he died hadn't no othah one evah been hiahed ag'in. Hit had got to be such a skeery-lookin' spot dat you wouldn' 'a' walked by de place in daytime, Uncle Petah, widout rubbin' de rabbit's foot in yo' hime pocket. At night I don't reckon nothin' went enar hit, 'cep'in' de hoot owls an' snakes an' hants an' student doctors.

"So de Improvemet S'ciety was stahted. Mis' Buffo'd was de one what got hit up. Maybe she fo'got to ax Miss Jessamine Poindextah, an' maybe she didn'. Anyways, Miss Jessamine wa'n't axed as I heerd fum de

talk goin' on up at Slocumses. Miss Jessamine was a maiden lady whut lived heah befo' yo' time, Uncle Petah. Now dere am sweet an' sour maiden ladies, jes' lak dere am sweet an' sour married ones. I nevah was one er de kin' dat b'lieved a woman's tempah 'pended on whether de Lawd sent her a husban' er not. One er de peperyest-tongued white ladies evah I worked fo' was a widow lady what had laid away three husban's. An' one er de sweetest ones I knows right now am Mis' Fanny's onmarried sistah, whut lives in Birningham.

"Well, de word sweet an' Miss Jessamine nevah had 'sociated much together. She had sharpened her tongue on other folks' feelin's so long dat she could slash right an' lef' wid it, same as you an' Isom use' to could wid a razor. Her an' Mis' Buffo'd had been bad fr'en's off an on fo' yeahs. Some said that Miss Jessamine had cas' sheep's eyes at de majah oncet 'pon a time, an' he disapp'inted huh ambition by marr'in' Miss Annie Brackenridge—you knows Miss Buffo'd was a Brackenridge.

"Anyhow, when Miss Jessamine foun' out dat dey had stahted dis heah s'ciety, an' she wa'n't even ask' to be a high private in hit, let alone de pres'dent er sumpin' lak dat, anyone might know dat she wa'n't gwine to res' twel she settled de sco' 'tween her an' Miss Buffo'd. I was ovah at Slocumses one day when Miss Jessamine call' on Miss Fanny; an' de way she let herse'f out 'bout Mis' Buffo'd mos' ce'tainly mus, 'a' het up de air roun' her. I was cleanin' de windows in de dinin' room an' I didn' have to strain my hearin' a bit to find out whut Miss Jessamine's 'pinion was of Mis' Buffo'd.

"Course dere was a comeback dat Miss Jessamine fix' up. Whut do she do but git up de Daughters er de Resolution, dat tuck in, as I un'stan's hit, all dem ladies what am 'cended fum Gawge Wash'n'on. My, but dat was a hot one fo' Miss Buffo'd! 'Cause Miss Jessamine ce'tainly did have blue blood in her veins, even ef some of hit was a li'l mixed wid vinegar; an' hit seem' dat Mis' Buffo'd's folks hadn' come ovah fum 'crost de sea twel aftah Gawge Wash'n'on was daid.

"Den de whole town waited to see whut Mis' Buffo'd gwine to do now. She didn' dis'point 'em. Mis' Buffo'd

had writ stories now an' ag'in fo' de newspaperahs, all 'bout de Civil Wah, an' such; an' Miss Jessamine could make up po'try out of her own haid. An' maybe she writ stories too. Hit was some such foolishness as dat. Anyhow, Mis' Buffo'd stahts de Arthurs' Club; an' course Miss Jessamine didn' jine, 'count er not bein' s'fficiently pu'suaded. Mis' Buffo'd tuck good care to give hit out dat de Arthurs' Club was very selec'; an' nachully dat didn' make her any mo' pop'lar wid Miss Jessamine dan she had been.

"An' so hit commence', nip an' tuck; an' de clubs an' s'cieties sprung up one aftah 'nother twel dey was as thick as blackberries in July. Folks commence' takin' sides wid dem two ladies, twel half er de town wa'n't speakin' to de yuther half as dey pass by. Talk 'bout de fracas 'twixt de No'th an' Souf! Uncle Petah, hit looked lak de whole Civil Wah was bein' fit ovah ag'in. 'Bout de onlies' lady whut kep' out er de muss, an' was fr'en's wid bofe er de en'mies, was Mis' Fanny. I used to hear her an' de cunnel laughin' 'twixt deyselves eve'y time Mis' Fanny brung home news 'bout anothah club bein' stahted. Hit got so dat even de servants tuck sides in de quar'l. Dat was de yeah de Mothers of Africky was fo'med by Miss Buffo'd's cook, an' de Do-Right Sisters by Miss Jessamine's.

"Sometimes I thinks dat de Lawd jes' sets back fo' a while eve'y now an then an' lets folks run things all by deyselves, jes' to see how fur dey will go on in quar'lin' an' jealousness. An' aftah dey gits to 'bout de mos' mixed-up-est place dey can git to, he say to hisse'f: 'Now hit's 'bout time to stop dis heah fool nonsense!' An'—bang!—down draps some gre't big trouble, whut hits eve'y body, rich an' po' all alike, an no way to dodge hit. An' folks is so busy gittin' together to he'p one 'nothah, an' tryin' to lighten each othah's woe, dat all de persnickety li'l diffunces 'twixt 'em jes' melts out er sight, lak a snowball on a hot stove lid.

"I has often wondered where dat fight would 'a' ended ef de yellow fever hadn' 'a' broke out. Hit was goin' all ovah de Souf at de time; an' 'count er de qua'n-teen laws bein' kep' unstrictly, hit struck dis town too.

Dere was pow'ful few fam'lies dat de Yellow Jack didn' strike. De onlies' two sides dat was bein' tuck by folks den was dem whut was well 'nough to do de doctorin' an' nussin', an' dem whut was sick an' dyin'.

"An' de Confeddick Cim'tery, whut had been plum' fo'got by de Improvement S'ciety endurin' de time eve'y-body was busy makin' deselfs pres'dent er some new club er othah—well, hit had to be noticed at las'. An' day by day folks was brung dere whut de fever had took off. Miss Jessamine was 'mongst 'em.

"Hit was endurin' de yellow fever time dat Uncle Zebe tuck chahge er de ci'mtery. Him an' his wife cl'ared away de vines an' bresh, an' cleaned de place er snakes. An' some er de gen'l'mans in town got together an' seen dat de walks was made an' sod an' flowers planted, an' ev'ything fix' up sumpin gran'!"

"Didn' de Improvement S'ciety take cha'ge er de place?" queried Uncle Peter.

"Ce'tainly hit did, Uncle Petah; jes' as soon as de gen'l'mans finished improvin' hit. An' dey has had cha'ge evah since."

"Am dat de onlies' s'ciety whut was lef' out of all dem whut was stahted?"

Before answering this question Viney carefully folded the partially made quilt with which she was occupied, into a neat roll. "Well, I wouldn't say dat perzackly, Uncle Petah."

She reached over toward the window for a rusty black bonnet that reposed on the sill.

"Whar you gwine?"

"I has to go on up to Ros'bel's, Uncle Petah. De Mothers of Africky is havin' a 'lection dis aft'noon, an' Ise runnin' fo' de office er Queen Region!"

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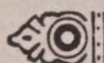

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